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**The
Canadian
Doukhobor
Settlements**

A Series of Letters

By

Lally Bernard

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THE CANADIAN DOUKHOBOR SETTLEMENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

WHERE did the Doukhoborts come from? and what part of the west do they occupy? and what were the reasons for their coming to Canada? are some of the many questions asked of the writer.

The great majority of the Doukhoborts came from the southern part of the Transcaucasia, from the country bordering upon the Black Sea, and some of them from the coast line bordering upon the Caspian Sea. The idea that these people were accustomed to a climate as cold as that of our western districts is erroneous. The history of one of the women of the Doukhoborts, put into the hands of the writer within the last few weeks, shows that they really came from a southern district, as she speaks of their occupation being cotton-spinning and agriculture.

A large number of the people now occupying what is known as the South Colony in Assiniboia came direct from Cyprus, where they had found refuge from persecution, owing to the help given them by the English Society of Friends (Quakers), who not only obtained permission for them to leave the Caucasus, but provided tents and looked after the welfare of the people while in Cyprus. They were under the charge of Wilson Sturge, one of the Society of English Friends, but owing to the climate being utterly unsuitable, it was deemed advisable by those interested in them to bring them to a more bracing climate.

So, in truth, the Doukhobor people who have come to this country have come from a southern climate rather than the Arctic circle, as so many people seem to believe. The heavy sheepskin coats and great "bourkas" owned by some of them would lead to this belief, but it is several

years since they have lived in the mountain districts, where these articles were procured, as the authorities drove them out from their comfortable homes—homes that they had tried to render habitable in spite of the fierce mountain tribes among whom they had been driven, with the hope, perhaps, that these tribes might finish the work of extermination begun by the Russian authorities.

The Doukhobor settlements in north-east Assiniboia comprise about six townships of three square miles each, and are situated about a day's drive from Yorkton, the present terminus of the Manitoba & Northwestern Railway. Still farther to the north-east six more townships are being taken up for the same purpose. This second settlement spreads over into the Saskatchewan Territory on the north, and just trespasses in a slight degree on Manitoba in the east. The Good Spirit Lake colony is about a day's drive from Yorkton, and represents perhaps the poorest of the Doukhobor settlements, as the people in their desire to remain near the lake took up land which does not give promise of being adapted for agricultural purposes.

The map which accompanies these letters gives little idea of the distance between the Doukhobor villages and Yorkton, for the state of the roads, the difficulty of fording the rivers, and the scarcity of horses and oxen among these people, all conduce to isolate the colonies at the present moment. However, the Thunder Hill colony, up in the corner of the three districts, promises to be a flourishing one when the Dauphin line opens up communication with the outer world for the villages therein situated.

The reasons which brought the Doukhoborts to Canada are very simple and easy to relate. To put it tersely, it was to prevent their extermination in the hands of the Russian authorities.

To enter into the history of the persecution of this sect would be to cover the period of over a hundred and fifty years, and to introduce dates and names of people and places utterly unfamiliar to Canadian readers. Accurate details as to the history of these people is hard to obtain, owing to the fact that they are illiterate, only four per cent. being able to read and write. It is doubtful if the archives of Russia could furnish the material needful for a history of these people that could be relied upon, for there must be many pages too shameful for any Government (even that of Russia) to record.

With the material which has of late come into the possession of the writer it is necessary to deal with care and judgment. The Doukhobor people are singularly honest and simple in their method of expressing themselves, but, as is so well known, tradition is a dangerous article to handle when it filters through many lips and has its only record in human minds.

It is the history of the Doukhobortsi now part of our Canadian people that is of greatest interest to us; what they have seen and suffered must vitally interest us and attract our attention.

There cannot be one generation of children born within the last century whose childhood has not been darkened through the terrors of persecution. This is, perhaps, the most wonderful part of the story, when for generations these people have been hounded down by both the Holy Synod of the Greek Church on account of their heresy, and yet again by the military authorities on account of their refusal to accept military service. When one considers that these people so treated are not only morally a race of giants, but also of immense stature and with great powers of endurance, coupled with the utmost gentleness of character, one is filled with amazement.

To quote from a translation put into the hands of the writer: "Many were the sorrows, many were the calamities they had to bear. Banished to a strange land (the Caucasus), where the soil, climate and conditions of life were quite unknown to them, surrounded by hostile tribes, and precluded by their religious principles from using arms even in self-defence, the Doukhobortsi seemed condemned to perish without leaving a remnant; but such is the strength of the commune principle which forms the basis of the life of this community, that, in spite of the continual suffering from invasion, change of climate and fevers, they at last succeeded in adapting themselves to local conditions, and even in reviving the trade of the province so as to become the most prosperous section of the Transcaucasian people."

These are the people that have been chased to the other side of the world to find a sanctuary in our western districts, and it augurs well for the future of our country that we should have such a large influx of people, who under the very worst of conditions could leave such a record, a people who ask no other privilege than exemption from

military service, and the right to practise their religion without molestation.

Colonization has much for which to thank persecution. A Russian historian, speaking of these people, among the other numerous sects that have arisen in southern Russia, remarks that the Doukhobortsi were, as sectarians often are, the pioneers of Russian colonization, and in 1888 these people formed a most flourishing colony of gardeners and farmers near Batoum, the port from which they sailed for Canada. That was a little over eleven years ago, and, while they have been exiles from central and southern Russia for over a century, they have from time to time not only suffered from invasion from mountain tribes, but from bitter persecution from the authorities. This persecution of late years had been begun with renewed vigor, and the horrors perpetrated are almost unfit for publication.

Sometimes for a period these people would enjoy rest and prosperity, and under one set of officials would receive praise for their industry, sobriety and splendid influence upon the people of the districts to which they were restricted. Then again it would seem that they were only allowed a respite that the pillage might later on be all the more profitable.

The history of their religion shows also that these ills were not always from without. The term "Spirit Wrestlers" has not been a misnomer. They did not always hold their faith with the same amount of zeal that is observable to-day. They owned no priesthood to exhort and keep them zealous in their good works, and it is a constant history of backsliding and revivals. That these revivals were due to the perpetual advent of some born leader of men among them seems clearly demonstrated. There has always been among these people men seemingly endowed not only with the great personal magnetism necessary to good generalship, but also the superior mentality that dominates over mediocrity.

This was observable among the Doukhobortsi who took part in the meetings held while the writer was among the colonies during the summer. The men who commanded attention from their fellows, and, so to speak, "held the floor," were men who, physically and mentally, seemed to take their rightful places in the community. The immigration authorities have already recognized this fact, and are most anxious that these men should have their genius

for organization and administrative power allowed full scope. The people as a whole are law-abiding and ready to fall in with the wishes of the official class, who to them are a revelation. That the principles that govern our country can do so on the lines indicated, which we as a new people have worked out, must be to them a never-ending source of amazement.

That their distaste for military service comes from no dislike to discipline is easily seen, the captains and officials of the ships that brought them here, and, in fact, all the officials who have come in contact with them, consider their discipline and orderliness amount to genius.

To Canadians their desire to be exempt from military service is incomprehensible, but it must be borne in view that our acceptation of the term "military service" and theirs is rather different. That these people did not tolerate the life mapped out for them by the military authorities of Russia is, perhaps, the greatest of all reasons why they are fit people to become citizens of a country such as ours. Imagine Canadians, mere boys, torn from home influence, and herded together with the vilest of the vile, taught the abominations of knout, and flogged for the least offence, until their manhood and their stature were dwarfed and weakened. One finds it hard to imagine one of our soldiers being compelled to flog a helpless fellow-countryman until the flesh hung in ragged strips from his quivering back, and the victim was at last flung into an outhouse to die. There are two sides to this military question, and our Anglo-Saxon race knows nothing of the horrors of enforced military service.

In the year 1820, under the rule of a humane man, we find that the Doukhobortsi were permitted to lay down their arms for a period and were distributed among the sanitary divisions of the army, in hospitals, as drivers, etc. In this age, when what may be called the civil and humane part of the service is of such overwhelming importance, may it not be that the stalwart Doukhobortsi can be utilized in connection with the hospital corps, where their splendid strength and unswerving patience and gentleness would make them the most excellent men for that branch of the service? That the fighting strength of an army will depend greatly upon the prowess of our grain growing community has long ago been proved, and the men who break the stubborn earth and devote their attention to the

grain growing districts of the far west will contribute in no small way to the defence of the Empire. That great question of the "food supply" benefits considerably from this influx of men to our west who have under the most disadvantageous circumstances demonstrated their ability as skilled agriculturists, and not only this, but had built up trade in a section of the country given over to lawless hordes.

LETTERS.

I.

YORKTON, ASSA., September, 1899.

We left Winnipeg on Saturday morning, the 19th of August, 1899, for Yorkton, Assa., the stepping-off place, as it were, for the Doukhobor settlements. A few Russians accompanied us, and hasty introductions took place just as the train moved out—introductions that were received with animation in a strange admixture of Russian, French and—not broken but pulverized English.

Mr. Peter Jensen, Senator, from Nebraska, a well-known Mennonite, came to speak to me for a moment. He had originally intended to accompany us, being entrusted by the Quakers of Philadelphia with a large sum of money to be expended on oxen and cows for the Doukhoborts, who stood greatly in need of such animals. The magnitude of that need we were only too soon to realize. Mr. Jensen was, however, indisposed and unable to come with us—a fact I have great reason to regret, as his opinion of the people we were destined to see so much of would have been of the greatest value.

The train was crowded, and I was not a little puzzled as to the reason of the number of passengers, evidently of a well-to-do class; and this conundrum has not as yet been solved, for, however sparsely settled the districts I have passed through, the same number of travellers has been noticeable, even during the harvesting.

We dined at Gladstone, a thriving village on the line, and had supper at Birtle. There was a magnificent sunset, and the Assiniboine valley began to unfold a panorama of exquisite beauty; but it was decidedly tantalizing to be told that after dark we should pass through the finest part of the valley.

It was midnight when we arrived at Yorkton, and by that time the car was nearly empty. At Fox Warren we had received an addition to our party in the shape of a very charming little lady, who, like ourselves, was destined to visit that people who, like so many other pioneers of great settlements, had been the victims of religious persecution. Mrs. Alma T. Dale, of Hartney, Man., was sent out by the Ontario Quakers, or, rather, "Friends," as they are truly called, to investigate fully the condition of the people and their pressing needs. That she had not far to go to accomplish this task is needless to say.

We were not able to make a start for the north camp before Monday morning, but by midday on Sunday, Soulergitsky, one of our fellow-travellers, who had been to Winnipeg with money entrusted to him by one of the Doukhobor communities to purchase supplies, was on his way north, accompanied by Arthur St. John, an ex-army officer who had retired from the service four years ago to become to all intents and purposes a follower of Tolstoy—a follower of Tolstoy being, as far as I can ascertain, a vegetarian, and a man who resolves to exist without handling what is considered by them the root of all evil—money.

These two men were due at the winter quarters, "Tambovska," where a meeting of the representatives of various villages in the north colony was to be held on the Tuesday.

Thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Crerar, the immigration commissioner, we were able to make an early start on Monday morning, "we" being the driver of the team and one Vera Welistchkina, a tiny, slender, dark-eyed woman, who, after having taken her degree in Switzerland as an M.D., had followed the Doukhoborts to their new and, we will hope, happy home, acting not only as doctor but nurse and interpreter and guide to many hundred souls.

Vera Welistchkina was to accompany me as far as the most northerly village of the north colony, and there we were to leave her to share with the Doukhoborts the various hardships that fall to the lot of poor settlers in the great Northwest.

The morning was cold and damp, and a strong wind blew steadily in our faces for the first three hours of our drive. I was simply conscious of a landscape yellow and mauve with prairie flowers, and long waving lines of feathery skunk-grass marking the trail before us. We were muffled up in furs and covered with fur rugs, and I



PETER MACHORTOFF AND MARIE MACHORTOFF, TYPICAL DOUKHOBORS.

am ashamed to say that, between the strength of the wind and the early hour that we had been obliged to start, I found my vision of the country shut out by tired eyelids, and was soon fast asleep; not for long, however, for we came to a bit of road that necessitated distinctly watchful riding.

Vera Welistchkina was fast asleep, wrapped in a Doukhobor "bourka," an immense cloak of black woollen material with a rough fur-like surface on one side. It is really a great circular cloak, and the material must be woven at least ninety inches wide, as the cloaks are five feet long and measure yards and yards round the lower edge. Men and women both own them.

We reached our first stopping-place at noon, having passed through a fine ranching country *en route*, and having sighted endless coveys of prairie chickens and seen flight after flight of ducks passing over towards the Assiniboine. The tiny farm where we put up was occupied by two lone women, mother and daughter, and it struck one as peculiar that they lived in so lonely a spot, evidently with no fear whatever as to the consequences.

To my surprise I found that they had seen a great deal of the Doukhoborts, who had passed through on their way to Kamsack, and they could not speak highly enough of their honesty and politeness. "They are good people," constantly reiterated our hostess, "good, God-fearing Christians, and I hope they will get through the winter without great privations." She had not quite so good a character to give the Galicians, and complained that they were apt to take her hospitality for granted, as well as the right to appropriate small articles whose value consisted greatly in the fact that she was too far from a store to replace them.

We started again on our journey about two o'clock, passing two or three small lakes, and through a most æsthetic tangle of low brush and wild flowers; the rose bushes were a mass of brilliant scarlet berries, and the blueberries, raspberries and Saskatoons were in abundance. The delight of my little female medico was unbounded. She had been shut up among the sick and ailing people of Selkirk, and when not nursing and caring for the sick had been employed in trying to act as general interpreter and letter-writer for the wretched, panic-stricken people, who imagined if their kin were obliged to work at a distance

that they were to be taken off to some Canadian Siberia, where they would spend the rest of their existence separated from their loved ones.

Canadians cannot realize what these people have gone through. One cannot be thankful enough that this is the case, and that among the Anglo-Saxon people persecution is so little understood. It might be that the Doukhoborsti would have received a heartier welcome from the Canadian people as a whole had we but known the faintest tinge of either political or religious persecution. As it is, the poverty of these people suggests only the influx of a pauper-immigration, whereas in truth they are in the condition which the inhabitants of Vancouver, B.C., and the unlucky citizens of St. John's, Newfoundland, found themselves after fire had swept all that belonged to them into the region of "what had been." The Doukhoborsti are in truth greater sufferers, for while the total number of souls flung into the wilds of the great Northwest amount to 7,361, there are only 1,500 adult men to claim homesteads. Siberia swallows up the flower of the Doukhobor manhood!

To bring the seven thousand some hundred and odd souls to this country meant the outlay of every cent of money the Doukhoborsti could call their own—all that was not confiscated and stolen by the Russian officials.

Even this did not suffice to bring them all to the journey's end, and there is still a debt owing to the English Quakers, who advanced money to enable them to meet the expenses of quarantine, etc.

The Canadian people will say, "And what of the money spent by the Government?" The money usually given as a bonus to the steamship companies, amounting to about \$4.85 per head, was deposited as a fund to be used for the benefit of the people, and controlled by a committee of well-known men in Winnipeg. Needless to say, the amount has not gone very far in furnishing these people with the necessities of life, and the American and English "Friends" have done all in their power to aid in the good work of establishing them on a footing which would enable them to make a fair struggle against the severity of the impending winter.

We drove until the sun was setting and found that our trail led us to the village near Kamsack. On our way we stopped at the house of a well-to-do Scotch farmer, where we found the farmer's wife employing two of the Doukho-

bor girls from the nearest village as seamstresses, and she told us that they gave much satisfaction, being very neat needlewomen, and quick to adapt themselves to our methods of work. Her husband had four of the men in the fields stacking hay, and she seemed greatly interested and amused at the habits of the people who had, as she expressed it, proved themselves far more civil and neighborly than many of her Anglo-Saxon countrymen.

This opinion we found universal throughout the country, with one exception, and that was in the district known on the map as "Good Spirit Lake," and among the settlers as "Devil's Lake."

It is from the women of the remote districts that one hears most of the boon that the incoming Doukhobor element has been. Many foreign people have little in common with the women of the Anglo-Saxon race, but the women of the Doukhobortsi have been trained in that school which gave to history so many splendid examples of womanly heroism—Christian martyrdom.

One could not help being struck by the greetings that passed between the splendidly educated and brilliant little lady doctor who had gone through such hardships and privations and these unlettered women.

"Zdrasticzi!" ("Wish you good health") she would cry as she caught sight of her countrywomen, and they would gladly hail her with "Spossi Gospida!" ("God bless you"), their eyes filling with tears at the sound of their own tongue in a strange land.

We were soon in the village of "Oospenie" (Assumption), and there we found Captain St. John, who was to take us to the next village, where, on the morrow, the different representatives of the various villages of the north colony were to meet and discuss the situation and make known their requirements, as well as to give Soulergitsky, the Russian follower of Tolstoy, a chance of ascertaining how many men from each village were absent, as he was anxious to find out their whereabouts if possible and to deliver letters given into his charge at Yorkton by the Commissioner of Immigration.

I shall never forget my first impression of a Doukhobor village. It was a raw, cold evening and we were dead tired, but as we climbed the slope of a hill and came upon the picturesque scene of this quaintly-built mass of chalet-like houses, built of mud bricks, with turf roofs, I could

not repress an exclamation of delight. The houses were coated with clay plaster and presented a uniform appearance; and what struck me instantly was the fact that although some of the houses were not completed, there was an absence of any kind of litter. Everything showed most careful, workmanlike handling, and I entered a blacksmith's shop that would have been a credit to a "model village."

Alas! in many of the houses fever-stricken patients had required the devoted attention of Marie Robitz, a Russian lady who had, like several other of her countrywomen, followed these poor women into the far West, doing what they could for the sick and suffering with a tenderness and devotion seldom seen. She could only speak a few words of French, and the lady doctor had to act as interpreter.

We went through many of the houses, and I was glad to have the chance of following my little travelling companion on her professional tour of inspection, as otherwise I felt guilty of vulgar intrusion.

The people, while as hospitable as it was possible for people so circumstanced to be, had so dignified and reserved a manner, and had shown such haste in surrounding themselves with the privacy of their own homes, after those terrible long months and years of exile and consequent hopeless wandering, that one felt almost an intruder. This trait in itself expresses what these people are.

They were so situated that it would have seemed almost natural for them to have remained herded together like cattle, as much for protection and warmth as aught else, but there on the bleak hillside they had taken all that was theirs by gift—earth, wood and water—and fashioned themselves homes which would have done credit to a skilled master-builder.

This fact alone speaks volumes for their value as home-makers in our vast West, and in spite of the cry that they are taking the land in reality destined for our grandchildren, the Doukhobor reserves, taken altogether, are not more than a mere "postage stamp flung on a tablecloth of large dimensions," and the only regret the writer feels is that these people could not have come into closer contact with the more settled districts of Canada, where their sterling qualities as home-makers would have received a more just and rapid recognition.

It was near the village of Oospenie that the famous photograph of Doukhobor women harnessed to the plough was taken, a picture which was the cause of endless discussion as to the brutality of the Doukhobor men "who harnessed their women to the plough and treated them like cattle," as I was told.

It is needless to say that the story had a very different solution to the one given to the world at large. The women of the Doukhobortsi are not in the habit of drawing ploughs or of building houses, but, like many others of their sex, they are capable of rising to the occasion; and this was one of the occasions when they distinguished themselves, as many of our pioneer ancestresses have done in days gone by. The summer season in that part of the world is short, and the supply of horses and oxen very meagre. The men of the village had been obliged to bring logs for the houses from a great distance, and many of them were working on distant farms. Flour ran short; the distance to Yorkton meant a tramp of at least thirty-nine miles, and the return meant the carrying of large sacks of flour on the women's shoulders. A woman's council was held, and it was decided that the only cattle available were to be sent to Yorkton, and the women declared that they would pull the plough. There was not an hour to be lost; they knew that the lives of their children and husbands depended on the effort they were willing to make, and a splendid effort it was. In days to come one of the Russian artists in their midst will paint a picture which will be a source of pride to the descendants of these women who shouldered this burden with the same steadfast courage with which they have borne many others.

The fact that there are so many more women than men must be borne in mind, as it will explain how willing these women of the Doukhobortsi are to lessen the burden that as a matter of necessity the men are called upon to bear.

The evening was setting in and a storm was brewing, so we had to make haste and press on to the next village, where we were to strike camp for the night. The shortest trail had to be taken, that over "Dead Horse Creek." Marie Robitz came with us to hand in her report at the meeting on the morrow. So three of us jammed ourselves into one seat, and in a jargon of Russian and very indifferent French, we were trying to make each other understand the situation when the situation made itself clearly understood.

"Dead Horse Creek; that's what we struck," explained the driver, as we hunted for the eyeglasses of the little lady doctor, and I uselessly expostulated with him for not giving us a timely warning of the frightful jerk that had sent us nearly out of the waggon.

"With that there jargon of double Dutch, yer wouldn't have heard," he grinned back at me.

That trail was vile, and to add to the misery of it we missed the best way in, and came by a long, round-about trail into the place. It was a site chosen by the Canadian Government on which to plant the first instalment of Doukhobortsi, 2,067 souls.

The instant we arrived, "Vera Michailovena," as the Russians called my companion, using her father's Christian name in the feminine in conjunction with her own, started out on her rounds among the sick and ailing. I followed quietly in her wake into the overcrowded and badly lighted rooms—rooms which they told me had in the winter to accommodate twice the number of people; and when I entered I found family after family occupying the curious "shelves" built round the large log rooms. These shelves are at least ten feet wide, and begin three feet from the floor. Here whole families live and sleep. A long narrow table ran down the centre of the room, and from the roof hung many utensils, while in the corner a neatly-dressed woman was busy spinning.

There is a great dearth of wool, and the women feel it keenly, as they are in the habit of spinning and weaving the warm woollen garments worn by both sexes.

The round made by the doctor proved a very sad one—a lad in the last stages of some lung affection; a sweet-faced girl dying from heart trouble; scurvy and various skin diseases showing the lack of wholesome food and the overcrowding of the houses.

There was an air of great anxiety and misery among these people, and when we learned the cause it lay like a pall over our own thoughts. A woman and a little girl had gone out on the Sunday to pick berries and had never returned, and search party after search party were sent out, but with no success. The nights had been cold and wet, and the vision one had of these poor lost ones seemed ever to stand before us.

We found our supper awaiting us in one of the rooms, where Soulergitsky and Captain St. John had their quar-

ters. It was really the residence of a splendid specimen of the race, an old soldier of ninety-nine years of age, who had served for twelve years in a penal regiment in Siberia and had been sent down to the mines to work in irons several times. Wearing a curious smock of blue material, and his snow-white hair covered with a fur cap as white as the curling beard that fell over his breast, he presented a startling likeness to the ancient Simeon in the picture of Holman Hunt's "Presentation of Christ in the Temple." The old soldier was a person of great importance in the colony, and a man of great piety. He constantly exhorted the people to remain true to their principles, which, so far as I could see, practically amounted to Christian socialism.

The evening meal among the Doukbobortsi was a late one, and this evening rather a sad one. Poor Vera Welistchkina had no appetite, and her dark eyes were full of tears. "My poor little brothers and sisters," she kept repeating, "it is not medicine they want, but good milk and fresh eggs."

There was perhaps a distance of six or eight miles between the two villages, and with only a rough trail connecting them, and these two villages had only one cow between them. Anna Robitz told us how a man whose wife was ill walked at least thirty-six miles every day to get her two cups of fresh milk.

After the evening meal was cleared away I brought out my fancywork, thinking that it might divert the women from their anxiety and sorrow, and induce them to show me some of their own handiwork. The experiment was successful, and in a few minutes I had a crowd of women about me, all keenly interested in the materials I had to show them, and most anxious that I should see their own handiwork—and very superior it was to mine! The prettily-woven patterns in their table-cloths, edged with knitted linen lace and cross-stitch embroidery, especially attracted my attention, and the "drawn linen work" they do is very fine and even. From the top of the curious helmet-like headdress of quilted cotton to the sole of the stout sandal-like shoe, they represent "home industry," and splendid work it is.

While we were examining each other's work, I heard a curious little "hum" going on close to me, and looking up I saw a mother putting her little ones to bed, and the gentle humming was the repetition of the Psalms by the children. Their sole education seems to consist in the

teaching by word of mouth of endless Psalms and hymns, and it is due to the ear and memory being so well trained that the children are so quick in picking up English.

It was late, and we had really driven close on fifty miles over a very rough country, so, exchanging "Spossi Gospidas" innumerable, I slipped off to my tent. There, to my amusement, I found that these dear people had prepared a bed for me with their down pillows and feather mattress of bright quilted cotton, while an immense "bourka" was used as a coverlet. I insisted that my kind hostesses should return the bedding to the respective owners, as I had a capital camping outfit, with heaps of warm bedding and pillows.

I did not learn until afterwards that I had been guilty of a great lack of "manners" in not accepting their kind and generous hospitality, though they did not know that with the keenness of woman's vision I had noticed how badly off they were for the very articles they had so kindly heaped upon the table prepared as a bed! Hudson Bay blankets laid over a sweet pile of prairie grass make a capital couch after a fifty-mile drive across rough prairie trails, and I was soon fast asleep dreaming of palatial Pullman cars, Russian prison life, and the royal mantle of purple and gold that clothed the great sweep of the prairie—that prairie destined to be a haven of refuge to the people of the Doukhobortsi.

II.

NEAR KAMSACK, ASSA., August 27th.

It was toward the end of August. The sunset had been threatening, and before morning the warning it conveyed was made clear. About four o'clock a terrific thunderstorm was raging, accompanied by rain and followed by a perfect hurricane and driving rain. The curious feature of the storm was that there appeared to be at least four thunderstorms disporting themselves at the same time at the four points of the compass, and the noise of the hail on the canvas of my rather insecure tent was astonishing. The wind never blew from one quarter for ten minutes at a time, but appeared to be a raging animal, trying its best to carry off the tent by main force. It was fortunate that

two umbrellas had been left in the corner, and that there was a goodly heap of fur robes to pile over one, otherwise for a time one might just as well have been in the open so far as the rain was concerned.

I was not left very long in solitude, however, as Soulergitsky's voice was heard above the raging of the wind and the claps of thunder begging me to come into the Doukhobor house, where my friends were quartered. I deemed it wiser, however, not to open the lacing of the tent, and remained faithful to the care of our "supplies," as we had a long ten days' journey before us and would without doubt require the store of provisions laid in. So I assured him that I was "all right" if he would give the tent pegs a few extra blows with the axe, and fortunately an axe was handy and the tent remained true to its trust.

Between five and six I sallied forth to view the desolate-looking land. I found a group of woebegone men contemplating the havoc wrought by the storm to both vegetable garden and crops. Being a "community," the garden and fields were common property, and a more miserable sight it has seldom been my lot to witness. I shall never forget the terrible mud, mixed with hail-stones quite as large as pigeons' eggs, and the general air of misery and despondency that prevailed that morning.

I found my way to the bake-house, where six women were at work kneading the bread for the community. A great trough was filled with dough, and four women were hard at work kneading the grey-looking mass that had been leavened with a sour sort of yeast that they had imported from the Caucasian Mountains.

They use XXXX flour, and the bread is quite eatable in spite of the slight sourness—a quality, however, which the advanced school of chemistry in Germany has pronounced most wholesome for a people who "live by bread alone."

The great bake-oven, built of mud bricks and covered smoothly with plaster, was filled with a crackling, blazing mass of fire, soon to be raked out and the great loaves on wooden shovels shut in until baked.

At this juncture the mouth of the furnace was filled with their artistically modelled pots, and my curiosity was so great that I signed to one of the women looking after the contents that I would like to see what materials the soup was composed of. The ingredients were simple

—the leaves of some shrub boiled in salt and water. This was the breakfast, eaten from a wooden bowl with small wooden spoons, with a small piece of dry bread nibbled in tiny bites that it might not vanish too soon. My own breakfast later on I found difficult to get through. The bread and butter and potted meat was transformed into ortolans served with delicate toast, and the tea with a dash of condensed milk became like Cleopatra's draught of wine mingled with costly pearls, in comparison with the fare that these poor hard-working women had partaken of.

During all our forty-eight hours stay in that village I felt perfectly miserable. Our supplies were not sufficient to allow of our sharing them even with the sick and dying, as the length of our stay among the villages depended greatly on the length of time our food would hold out. Everywhere we went the greatest privation was the scarcity of milk.

It falls to the lot of but few Canadians to live for ten days among women and children weak and gaunt for want of food, and to see such people ready to share their last crust with any stranger who comes to their villages.

Several people have been most interested in the communistic principles of these terribly persecuted people, but to one who moves among them communism seems only the natural outcome of their position, just as vegetarianism is not so much a matter of religious principle as of the universal condition of the peasantry all over Europe, where meat is in truth the greatest luxury.

The Doukhobortsi have only been vegetarians for about four years, and at this date many of them ate fish, and in some instances farmers have told me that the younger men are beginning to eat meat in small quantities. This possibly is due to the fact that farmers' wives are not prepared to bake enough bread to satisfy the appetite of a stalwart young Doukhobor.

It is devoutly to be hoped that the law of necessity which governs human nature to such a vast extent, will compel these people as a whole to lay aside what was the outcome of necessity, and that they will begin to use the food required to sustain life in a cold climate.

The craving for butter and sugar demonstrates that the system is demanding what their supposed principles withhold.

The people as a race are of magnificent physique and

require strong food. Practical farmers in the west who have come into contact with many of the Doukhobortsi tell me that it is only a question of time; that one winter in the country will teach these people that they cannot face the cold without consuming a certain amount of fat.

I had been led to imagine that the reasons for their being a non-carnivorous race was due to religious conviction, whereas Captain St. John tells me that the true history of the people not eating meat is as follows: A certain section of the exiled people found themselves in debt. Their more provident brethren were anxious to put an end to what they considered an undesirable condition of affairs, and proposed to find means of paying off the debt incurred. To do this it was necessary to deprive themselves of one of the very few luxuries they could call their own. Meat proved the greatest luxury in that part of the world; so meat was accordingly renounced, and the money so saved was used for their brothers. Finding that they could live without meat, the idea occurred to them that as a universal brotherhood they should not take the life of any animal—created even as themselves by an Almighty Being—so no animals were slaughtered. From this train of thought they followed the idea that to bear arms against a fellow-being was also a crime, and it is only a very short time since their arms were stacked and burnt amidst general rejoicing and prayer; and to-day among all these seven thousand souls not one fire-arm is to be found.

How long this will remain as a "principle" it is difficult to foretell. Will they allow the industrious little gophers to come and devastate their grainfields, and the foxes and coyotes to rob the farmyards, while the timber-wolves and bears make great havoc among their flocks, and even carry off their children? These are questions that common sense finds but one answer to. But meanwhile the sportsmen of the West rejoice in the knowledge that the immense number of prairie chickens and ducks that throng the hay meadows and "sloughs" of the far western districts are to be left to multiply exceedingly. *

* Author's note.—Since writing the above I have received the following letter from Captain Arthur St. John, whom I had quoted in all good faith as the authority for the previous statement as to their reasons for becoming vegetarians. In answer to his request I insert the following:

"Seeing the effect of drink on some of their members, they gave that up; and then, I think, tobacco and smoking. The giving up of flesh-eating was not connected with the poverty question, but arose, as it naturally does, from a repugnance to killing animals."

We had hardly finished breakfast before Mrs. Alma T. Dale arrived on foot, the axletree of her trap having been broken in crossing a terrible mud-hole—a veritable quagmire—after the storm. It was welcome news to learn that she had found shelter in the farm-house where I had come across the Doukhobor girls the day before, and to hear that the result of her chat with the young Scotch farmer and his wife in regard to the character of the Doukhobortsi was even more satisfactory than she had expected.

The delegates from the different villages in the north country began dropping in from all directions. A pretty woebegone lot they were. The storm had passed over a large area and many of these men had been “footing it” since daybreak. Their great “bourkas” had protected them from the rain, but the visions they brought with them of their fields and gardens ruined by the hail was not a cheerful one.

Soulergitsky brought a table into the open and ranged the primitive benches in rows, that he might better address the group of about forty men assembled. But a drenching rain came down and they were obliged to take refuge in the largest room, described in my last letter.

A curious scene was that meeting. The shelves on either side of the room served as the dwelling-place of several families, and half of us were ranged on either side of the long narrow table, just under the skylights, which let in a dim light and a gentle drip of rainwater. I greatly regretted not having an artist friend with me, to sketch what was, in fact, the first Doukhobor assembly of the North-west colony.

Soulergitsky is in truth a self-constituted leader of the entire Doukhobor people—a Russian by birth, and an artist of considerable merit. He is, first and foremost, a born leader of men, magnetic to a degree, and has served a great purpose, and aided the Department of Immigration greatly in acting as an organizer of labor among these people.

A most interesting and charming personality, both physically and mentally, is Soulergitsky. Small, well-knit, but with a head and shoulders of perfect modelling, he suggested forcibly the model so often used by the German school in representing the head of the “Christus.” The fine, curling beard and moustache, luminous eyes under a perfectly modelled brow, combined with the most exquisite

texture of skin and coloring, gave the man an almost ideal appearance. The curious transparency of complexion, instead of indicating delicacy, give one the impression of a superabundant vitality that borders on the supernatural. Merry as a child, impetuous as a woman, and withal as imperious as a military despot, he combines with these contradictory characteristics those of a born administrator of affairs, and has won the admiration and esteem of all the officials with whom he has come in contact. He is the son of a bookbinder in Russia, and has, like many of his countrymen, worked out some of the problems of administrative justice in a Russian prison.

Prison life in Russia has become important in the education of the Russian people, for, according to all that one can ascertain from those who are fortunate enough to escape from the clutches of the "Great Bear," the mass of educated and enlightened Russians are to be found behind the bars of their military prisons, or among the ranks of penal regiments, or again struggling for existence in the vast Siberian wilds.

Among the educated Russians whom it was my good fortune to meet, I found that the fact of the Doukhobortsi having been allowed to leave Russia was regarded as a matter of regret, as they considered the martyrdom of a few was in the end to effect the freedom of many. In this ease-loving nineteenth century it strikes one as peculiar to find that the craving for martyrdom is not wholly extinct.

The meeting progressed without any interruption until the door opened and the best looking specimen of manly beauty it has ever been the good fortune of the writer to behold entered the room. This was a Russian gentleman, "Maiefski," as the name is pronounced, who had taken up his residence among these people. After Mons. Maiefski came another specimen of a man devoted to the practical application of the humanitarian creed, Mons. Sinet, a Parisian by birth, and an artist by profession. Poor lad, he was little more than a boy, and had served for two years in a military prison in France for refusing to conform to some of the military regulations in force in that country which has so curiously interpreted the motto of the republic, "*Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité*," within the past year.

Mons. Sinet, like Captain St. John, is one of those

who prefer to dispense with the use, or, as they claim, abuse, of the "almighty dollar," and live what is known among a certain section of society in Europe as "The Life," on the general principles advocated by the elder Tolstoy. It may be that in great centres of civilization such a movement is the natural form of reaction from a vitiated form of society. But in this great West, under conditions where the struggle for existence is rather against climatic conditions and certain natural obstacles than against an unequal division of the good things of this life, the man who has enough food in the house for one meal divides it with any waif or stray, fulfilling without a thought of communism or socialism the great natural law of universal brotherhood, which many books written in many tongues are endeavoring to spread broadcast among the European countries teeming with population.

Towards the end of the conference, held in a language I would have given worlds to understand, one man stood out conspicuously from the crowd, and all the arguments appeared to be levelled in his direction.

Maiefski, who sat next the writer, was good enough to translate into French the substance of the conversation. It appeared that formerly communism was practised among the people *en masse*, but since they had divided into villages, of in most cases a hundred and forty souls, each village formed a commune in itself, and to one village there would perhaps be apportioned only one pair of horses or oxen, these poor beasts having to do the ploughing and carting for the whole village. The man Iven Ivin, who so attracted my attention from the vigor and force with which he declaimed his view of the case, had been the recipient of a loan from Prince Hillkoff, and with part of the money had bought a pair of splendid farm horses, as well as some agricultural implements.

Iven Ivin had been called upon to admit that the horses were the common property of his village, "Michaelowka." He had done so, but found that as common property the horses could not do half the amount of work that under his especial care and guidance they were capable of performing. So he took them into his own stable and announced his intention of being ploughman in chief for the future. "A rift in the lute." Communism was not adapted to the practical working of everyday life. It had been all right while these people were living under extra-

ordinary conditions, but the ordinary conditions demanded another arrangement of social economics. It were best to confess to a secret thrill of joy that our country was already teaching these dear people the practical lessons of everyday life, and that all the theories of men and angels could not alter that great law of nature that makes the power of individuality assume its proper place in the ordering of the whole.

Then rose the "ancient Simeon," the ninety-nine-year-old patriarch to whom I alluded in my last letter, and for at least half an hour he exhorted Iven Ivin to remain true to the principles that had become theirs through the light shed from the fire of persecution.

It was a magnificent burst of oratory, my little friend Vera Welistchikina assured me, and the impassioned gestures and resonant voice of the splendid old man made a dramatic picture I shall never forget. But to my delight, some days afterwards, when we arrived in the beautifully situated village of Michaelowka, close to the Swan river, I was introduced to Iven Ivin, who had the best house in the village, three rooms and a stable, and in the stable a well-groomed pair of horses in good condition. While we were at breakfast he passed on the way to the great garden of the community, and I knew that Mr. Iven Ivin and common sense had triumphed, and that the poor horses were not to come to an untimely end through the handling by many masters.

The meeting over, the people dispersed as if by magic, each one wearing either a sheepskin coat or the great "bourka," and carrying long staffs in their hands. They were all desired to look out for the lost woman and girl, and Captain St. John gave them all a piece of paper with the request in English that any farmer they might meet would do his best to assist them in the search for the poor lost ones. Gravely and with great courtesy they bade each other adieu. Some, I am glad to say, with letters brought from Yorkton by Soulergitsky for the different villages, many of which contained a little money earned by the men who had found employment on farms and on railways.

We had hardly finished the second meal of the day, about five o'clock, when Soulergitsky and a man named Bronch were on their way north, and Maiefski, in his waggon, struck straight across the prairie, bearing with him Marie Robitz and Mons. Sinet. Marie Robitz was

greatly in demand in the village, where Maiefski was preparing a home for his wife and brother, who were on their way from Switzerland to join him.

There was much Cyprus fever and a terrible amount of illness among the children. The comparatively small number of either very young or very old told a dreadful tale of where the mortality had been greatest, and one felt oneself living in a middle-aged community.

One more night had to be spent in the village of Tambovska, which I learned with relief was only a temporary abiding place while the sites for the other villages were being chosen.

Another terrific storm at daybreak, but this time no hail, and my companion, Mrs. Dale, proved quite equal to the occasion, and crept out of the tent, dragging a huge axe after her, and secured as best she could the canvas of the tent. But the end of it was that we had to take refuge under the table, as the water was driven through in every direction.

Just as we were ready to leave the village, word came to Captain St. John that the woman and child whose absence had caused grief in the "serai," as the building holding so many families is called, had come back, having been sheltered in a Canadian farm-house for two nights after one terrible night spent in the open. The tenderness and joy with which the two lost ones were received was good to see, for in spite of the hardships and privations these people are enduring, they have never lost the womanliness and affectionate dispositions one associates with the highest forms of Christianity."

III.

August 29th.

We were not sorry to leave the "Tambovska," or winter quarters, even though we made our start in the cold and wet of the early morning. Captain St. John came with us, and by the side of our waggon walked a stalwart Doukhobor bearing under his arm three or four flat cakes made of dough mixed with wild cherries and raspberries. This was his breakfast, and as we had made a very early start, he nibbled bits from time to time in the pauses of the conversation. Captain St. John was to settle a question which was troubling the Doukhobortsi greatly.

They had settled upon a village site, and the rumor had gone forth that the unlucky people had encroached upon land set apart by the Government for a school section. The humor of the situation did not strike my companions, but to me it was exquisitely funny. We drove for a long time, jolting over the worst trail it has ever been my lot to "strike," and not a sign of man or house in any direction, only the great lonely prairie, and here and there a little bluff like a ragged tuft on a great green mat.

Through the soaking grass again and again Captain St. John waded, at the request of the Doukhobor who strode panting at our side, and it was only to find that the surveyor's stake had been either pulled up by Indians or misappropriated by some lawless tramp. At last the Doukhobortsi's fears were set at rest, and the great Educational Department of Canada escaped the danger that menaced it.

We parted with our Doukhobor with the usual courteous salutations, his manners admitting of no deterioration even in the wilderness, and went our weary way with a cold damp wind driving in our faces and precluding any possibility of enjoyment.

Wriggle, wriggle, bump, bump,—the rugs would not stay in position for five minutes. Captain St. John, who had not slept for two nights—the quiet hours had been devoted to his letter-writing, which assumed gigantic proportions, in relation to these people and their affairs—was fast asleep beside the driver, and I was in constant terror that the terrific bumps would send him headlong out of the waggon.

However, no such accident happened, and by noon we reached a village, where a halt was called, and the poor tired horses were rested and fed. The care that our teamsters took of their respective "gees" was most satisfactory, and in spite of bad stabling and the hideous state of the trails we traversed, the horses seemed none the worse for wear at our journey's end. Strange to say, oats and hay were scarce in that great grain-producing country, though in the vicinity of Yorkton I saw the finest crops of oats in the Northwest Territories.

We were welcomed with open arms at the village where we made our first stop on our way to Fort Pelly, where camp was to be struck for the night. Térpenie (Patience) was the name of the village, where Vera Welistchkina found several of the women she had crossed the Atlantic

with from Batoum. The greetings were joyful, and we were made to take our places in a nice tent, and tea, bread and butter and seed onions were brought by way of refreshments; but I was greatly interested in their kitchen, hollowed out of the side of a bank, and the oven was a masterpiece of mason work. Everything was as neat as a new pin.

They were all hard at work building their houses of sods, neatly covered with plaster, and the village street was marked with a ploughed furrow, ready for the line of houses on either side.

We had to make for a ford on the Assiniboine before reaching Pelly, and when we arrived there we were not a little relieved to find that the storm had not rendered it impossible for us to cross the river. Before reaching Pelly we had to cross a marshy bit of ground, where the going was so bad that the mosquitos, which swarmed about us in myriads, had a fair chance of sport.

It was sundown when we drove into the fort, dead tired and half eaten alive. The trading store is kept by a Mr. Mackenzie, and a very picturesque enclosure it is—a long, low, whitewashed log building, half of it roofed with thatch, and the rest with a roof of sod which was one blaze with the prairie sunflower, a wondrous mass of gold and green showing up against the white of the surrounding buildings. The Indian “tepees” close at hand, and the stalwart mounted policemen cantering off to the fort, made a picture fit for the brush of an artist.

Mr. Mackenzie kindly sent his men to put up a large, splendidly-ventilated tent for us, and we were soon hard at work getting supper ready, and blessing the smoke which helped to keep the clouds of mosquitos at bay. By midnight we were all stretched out under our blankets in the great tent, but sleep was another matter. The mosquitos and, alas! fleas made sleep for the three of us occupying the north corner of the tent an impossibility; but before morning I found myself the sole occupant of the tent to whom sleep refused to come. It was with no little wonder that I contemplated the freak of fortune which had brought me into close quarters with the two interesting women sleeping quietly one on either side of me—one a Russian Socialist, and a one-time political prisoner, a girl in years and a woman in suffering; on the other side a lady “minister” belonging to the Ontario

Society of Friends, a most eloquent and able woman, and yet the most practical, original, and interesting specimen of Canadian womanhood.

The coyotes were howling not far off, and the mosquitos had hummed themselves to sleep, and, thank Heaven! at last I was able to follow their example.

The morrow found us *en route* for the most northerly village of the north colony, lying close to the point where the three districts of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan. and Manitoba join. The North (or Thunder Hill) Colony comprises thirteen villages.

September 1st.

It is not a little sad to see that even under the existing circumstances Doukhobors are victimized by some people addicted to smart practices. A Doukhobor bought a pair of young steers, with the idea of breaking them for the plough. The price was seventy dollars, and the payment in cash. Within a week after he had taken the oxen home they disappeared, and he heard, on inquiring from some of his fellow-villagers who happened to be employed near the scene of his purchase, that the oxen had been seen in the vicinity of their old home. When he arrived to look for the runaways, the farmer, who had understood enough "Russ" to sell his cattle, failed to understand what the Doukhobor was seeking, and so obtuse was he that in the end an interpreter had to be brought all the way from Yorkton at the Doukhobor's expense to explain matters. This, I believe, he did in English the farmer would fain have misunderstood, but the vigor of his language left no margin for doubt as to his appreciation of the situation. The poor Doukhobor, however, had lost both time and money, and the delay had caused him an immense amount of vexation and worry.

They are not as yet skilled in our methods of agriculture, and in breaking the land usually plough too deep, the result being more labor than the occasion warrants. But in passing through their villages I noticed that they were using only the best implements, and these were well sheltered from the rain, a fact not always noticeable in the farmyards of the Anglo-Saxon settlers.

If the Federal Government saw its way to sending several of the younger men as farm hands to the experi-

mental farms and agricultural colleges throughout the Dominion, they would be doing a great service to the people as a whole. All peasant races, and particularly the Russian peasants, have a certain amount of conservatism among them. It is very hard to induce them to swerve from the teachings of their forefathers. These people, however, from sheer force of circumstances, have had to adopt customs and ideas foreign to a peasantry. There is a saying that with the knowledge of a new language comes a new vista of thought, and without doubt, taken as a whole, these people have made great strides since they landed in Quebec.

The country we were passing through was in reality a fine ranching country—masses of the pea vine growing in great quantities, and the hay meadows ready for the scythe; though, by the way, in all my wanderings through the West I never saw either a scythe or a sickle. They belong to a pre-Adamite age, according to the younger generation in this country.

The first stopping place was quite a large village, where we lunched in a huge "seri," as the other houses were not as yet habitable. The day had changed from being intensely hot to a temperature calculated to give us magnificent appetites, and we certainly were ravenously hungry. There were a greater number of men in this village than in any other I had visited, and they were all busily engaged in building their log houses, in many cases putting the stable against the end of the house, with a door communicating with the main building. The arrangement, if not a very agreeable one, was at least a humane one, as by that means they insured the horses having some of the warmth from the great clay oven, which they told me gave out a steady and healthy heat. I found this hard to realize, but the Menonites have tried the experiment with success, often using straw for fuel where wood is scarce.

The wood, brought from the "bluffs," was stacked like the skeleton of an Indian "tepee," drying in the sun, but the great part of their fuel is to be collected after the leaves have fallen, when it is easier to get the dead wood out from among the underbrush. There are few complaints in that part of the world about the scarcity of fuel, and one marvels at the content with which they stack what, after all, are poles no larger than the "fagots" of European countries. White poplar is considered good firewood, but the black species is condemned as "rotten stuff."



TYPICAL DOUKHOBOR GIRL AND BOY.

A Russian peasant thinks nothing of the trouble of bringing wood for his house for a distance of ten miles, and very often a log house is fitted together close to the bluff whence the logs are taken, and later on transported piece by piece to the village site. Economy of labor does not seem to be their motto, provided they can turn out a neat piece of work.

The interiors of the houses were finished with some idea of architectural beauty, and in several cases a rude sort of carving was attempted in finishing off a jutting rafter with a curve or scroll. The plaster work I found, as usual, excellently neat and well finished, and when one considers that all this labor is performed with the rudest tools and under great difficulties, it is certainly to the credit of the people.

While waiting for our midday meal I watched the woman who had taken upon herself to act as hostess-in-chief bring in a snow-white table-cloth from the grass where it had been bleaching in the sun, and spreading it on a rude bench, she rolled it firmly round a sort of "rolling pin," and with a flat piece of wood about two feet long and three inches wide, one side of it notched like the surface of a washboard, she sawed it rapidly and firmly over the cloth, sending it from one end of the bench to the other, the result being that the cloth came out really very well pressed, looking as if it had been through one of the "mangles" used in our laundries.

The Doukhobortsi use no kind of intoxicating beverage, but in a large barrel close to the door of the room where we lunched I found they kept a distinctly non-enticing drink, composed of flour and water, allowed to ferment until it tasted like mild vinegar and water. It may be wholesome; it certainly was refreshing, but I should imagine it was anything but a blood-making beverage.

We were soon on our way farther north, having left some lemons and condensed milk for the invalids, who were unfortunately many in that village. "Da Swidanya" (*au revoir*) we called to the crowd of women trotting by the waggon for a last word with Vera Michailovena. Should we ever "come again?" Who knows? The prairie trails are many, and lead to the west as well as to the east.

At last the Swan River was seen winding its way through grey-green banks of dwarf willow, a lovely stream

looking like an ideal trout stream, with tiny rapids over pebbly shallows, twisting and turning as if playing hide-and-seek with the trail. We forded it safely, but the current was very swift, and the farther bank meant a scramble for the tired horses. The harness-makers in that part of the country must furnish first-rate material, judging from the strain borne by the trappings of our two steady-going "gees."

We were no sooner on the new trail leading to the village of Michaelowka than scudding on before us in the deep rut made for heavy wheels was a large badger. "After prairie chickens," shouted our driver, and for a good two hundred yards we chased, trying to run Mr. Badger down. The horses did not relish this performance, for badgers have an awkward way of suddenly charging for the legs of the nearest animal; but this time he found it convenient to dart aside and give us the road to ourselves, and as he scuttled through the grass and stunted rose bushes, a great flock of chickens flew for shelter to a tiny bluff near by.

It is all so interesting, this great northern country, and the climax was reached when we arrived at the river bank, where we found that, to reach our destination, it would be necessary to cross the river (which had deepened and widened) on a raft, worked as a ferry by a rope stretched across from shore to shore. The waggons, lightened from their load of passengers and supplies, were to ford the river lower down, just above the rapids, and we were transferred to the frail raft made of rough-hewn logs piled across each other.

On the farther bank a group of brightly-dressed Doukhobor women were waiting to pull the raft close to the shore. In fifteen minutes it was all over, and we were watching with great interest the crossing of the teams—decidedly ticklish work, for the loose stones at the head of the rapid might, with the aid of the strong current, have caused the horses to slip, and a slip would have in all probability caused a tragedy.

One girl had already lost her life in crossing the river, and Soulergitsky is earnestly petitioning the Government to build a bridge at this particular point, as the villages are many along the land skirting the river. We had passed close to many villages, but had not had time to do more than cry "Dobra Chass" (good-day) as we passed. Many

women we had met drawing logs for the houses the men were building, and two by two they drew them, with a tiny pair of roughly-made wooden wheels, with a cross-bar on which rested the heavy end of the log.

The gardens we saw looked in a fair condition, but the weather was getting very cold, and if these people did not get what potatoes they had pitted before the middle of October, they had small chance of saving them for winter use. Cucumbers and radishes seem to do well, and they had what is known as the Polish radish, which lasts all winter, is black in color, and very hot and pungent. Clear of weeds and fairly well arranged, the great patches of vegetables showed that these people were more or less experienced gardeners.

IV.

MICHAELOWKA, ASSA.,

NORTH DOUKHOBOR COLONY, Sept. 2nd.

It was just sundown when we entered the lovely village of Michaelowka, situated on the banks of the Swan River, close to the dividing lines of the three districts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Assiniboia, and known among the English-speaking people as the "Thunder Hill" colony.

The first village had been built close to the water's edge, on low ground, but the people, finding it unhealthy, were building a new village on a lovely plateau overlooking the old site. It was a picturesque and beautiful spot.

When we arrived we found Soulergitsky seated in the midst of about forty men, most of whom had come in from the surrounding villages to deposit their earnings in the common purse, which was to be entrusted to Soulergitsky for the purpose of buying supplies.

The men were all busy either working in the fields or at railway construction. The Dauphin line, which is being built by Messrs. Mackenzie & Mann, is eventually to come through the heart of the North Colony, and at this date ought to be some twelve miles from Michaelowka. If this line can be kept open during the winter months it may prevent the danger of a serious shortage in the supplies needed for the North Colony.

The part of the line in process of construction from

Cowan runs through a terrible piece of country, and from the state of the trail it was impossible to bring to the village a load of flour that had been waiting at Cowan since February.

At the date of writing, the men of the North Colony have plenty of work, known as "station work," which consists in laying the roadbed at so much per cubic yard. The work is most difficult in this particular instance, and there were no other men who would undertake to do it at the price paid, as it meant standing up to their knees in water for at least eight hours a day, and the Doukhobortsi were all more or less weakened by malaria contracted during their exile in unhealthy districts, consequently the work was found to be terribly trying.

It was suggested that they should ask for higher pay, as those who had to do with the organization of the labor parties felt that the contractors were taking advantage of an unfair condition of affairs. This may have been true, but the writer ventures to point out that each foot of the work accomplished was bringing the railway nearer the villages; and it would hardly be wise to hazard anything like a strike which might in any way prejudice the employers against the employees, and perchance turn that branch of the line in another direction.

The labor question, even in that remote district, threatens to become a hydra-headed monster, which snarls at you from the depths of a British Columbian forest, or leaves its slimy trail across the vastness of the western prairie.

The Doukhobortsi are most anxious to have what they call the "good-will" of their fellow-men, and an example of the difficulty they find in obtaining it may be gathered from the following little story: Soulergitsky had placed a good many of the Doukhobor men on farms, the farmers paying what they considered a fair wage, considering the fact that the men could not speak English and were unskilled in our methods of agriculture. Having occasion to go to Winnipeg, Soulergitsky found the labor representatives organizing what was nothing more nor less than a crusade against the importation of foreign labor. "The Doukhobors were lowering the price of labor, and taking the bread out of the mouths of Anglo-Saxons." Back to the north hurried Soulergitsky. This would never do. "Little brothers," he cried, "we, a universal brotherhood, are hurting our Canadian brethren; we must ask for the

same wage as they do." The farmers were approached and the matter explained as well as Soulergitsky was able to explain it. The farmers' answer was not given to me verbatim. Soulergitsky's manners are irreproachable, and he did not consider the language adapted for feminine ears.

I am still at a loss to understand that great labor question. Rumor has it in the great grain-growing districts, that, in spite of a most bountiful harvest, many farmers must suffer. Why? Because there are not enough men or horses to take that great harvest off the land. Ten thousand men were wanted from Ontario, and only eight thousand could be got. Among the 7,361 Doukhobortsi in Canada there are 2,000 adult men—and these are confined to what after all is a comparatively small district.

We found at Michaelowka a Russian girl of about nineteen, who, with an elder sister, had given up everything to follow these people into the wilderness. When I say "everything," I mean literally everything. She was devoting herself to the cause of these people heart and soul. When I said to her, "This is the largest village I have seen," she replied quickly, "Ah, madam, and it has the largest cemetery. My dearest little brothers and sisters are there." (To these people all are "their little brothers and sisters.") "They could not stand the horrors of persecution," she added, "and the ones that died were just young things like me, or the very old ones."

We were both silent. "What was it?" I asked, compelled at last to say something.

"Ah!" She spread her hands out with a gesture of despair. "What was it? Why, madame, it was just everything! Hunger that brought sickness, exposure that brought consumption, sorrow for the exiled relatives in Siberia that brought heartbreak!"

I cannot describe the pathos of the words uttered in French. "I was no doctor," she said. "I know so little—I did what I could." No doctor!—this tender slip of a girl with her shining eyes and sensitive quivering lips, just at the age when life is sweetest and is made up of trifles light as air. I thought of the millions of girls lounging in hammocks, petted and spoiled, wearied with the good things flung at their feet, and this pretty young thing, wearing the plainest of clothing (she had given all she could to her "sisters"), eating bread and whatever fare the Doukhobors had, nursing the sick and cheering the women, heartsick for

their loved ones in Siberia. No doctor!—perhaps not, but surely practiced in the art of healing!

We strolled around the village in the evening after our supper, eaten in the open air. First we were taken to see a spring of splendid water which sprang from a hole in the cliff; then to view the grandeur of Ivan Ivin's house, which boasted of three rooms, and not only several well-glazed windows, but stout wooden shutters, well calculated to keep out the cold.

Later on the musical young people of the village sang for us some of the Psalms and a few of their "folk-songs." A row of girls sat on one side of the room and boys on the other, while the leader, a young man of about twenty, with a deep baritone voice, occupied a central position. The music was very quaint, but to those who have heard the chants of the Greek Church it was not unfamiliar. The deeper voices of the men are used as a sort of accompaniment; the notes, sustained and deep, are in perfect harmony, while the phrasing is most curious. The harmonies are exquisite, but the treble has a strange pathetic "protest," the beat falling on the most unexpected note, and at times producing the effect of the *pizzicato* snapping of a violin string.

The song that struck me most was "The Song of the Plough," sung by the women to cheer the men while driving their wooden ploughs through the stubborn earth. I smiled as I thought of the "sulky plough" of latest design I had just examined in the well-built shed close by, and wondered if modern agriculture would furnish inspiration for these people.

It was all charming and picturesque. The villagers went about chatting with their neighbors over the events of the day, always greeting each other with old-time courtesy. These people may not have the "book learning" of our Canadian people, and we may be able to teach them many useful things, but the benefit is not all one-sided. The gentleness of manners that springs from kindness of heart has a great charm, and the contrast between the casual greetings of the modern civilized world and the deferential salutation of the Doukhobor men and women leaves one something to think about. Our modern acceptance of the word "education" is a strange one, and the definition of the term "culture," as a condition of the intellect rather than amassed knowledge, is a definition which is not sufficiently appreciated on this continent.

The *mise en scene* was decidedly quaint, and for the hundredth time I regretted the absence of an artist's brush to transfer the picture to canvas. The mist lay low over the river, and before the open doors of the houses rose a tiny column of blue smoke from the "smudges" lighted to protect us from the mosquitos; but even this precaution was not sufficient, and a Doukhobor woman brought a gaily colored 'kerchief that I might cover my head and throat from the assaults of those pests.

At the end of the village street Soulergitsky sat among the blue-coated peasants, still working hard with pen and ink, trying to organize and arrange the affairs of these people, whose knowledge of the coinage of the country was as vague as their idea of the geography of Canada. Here and there was seated an elderly man, with a great sheepskin coat thrown over his shoulders to protect him from the dew that was beginning to fall; but bareheaded Soulergitsky stood, the light of a solitary lamp showing his features in strong relief against the closing twilight. It was after ten o'clock that night before the meeting closed and the indefatigable disciple of Tolstoy could get his supper.

Just before we retired to our tent for the night he arrived, breathless, to tell us the results of the meeting. Not very satisfactory, I fear, from a Doukhobor standpoint, was the news that had been brought in by the different delegates from the villages of the North Colony. The amount of sickness was great, and the work at railway construction was most difficult, owing to the weakness of the fever-stricken men. The men seemed fully to realize the gravity of the situation, and the responsibility that rested upon their shoulders regarding the provision of food and fuel in the coming winter.

There is no idle curiosity to be observed among these people. The groups of men who came to speak to Captain St. John on matters of importance always inquired the reason of our coming among them, and upon hearing that it was from a kindly motive they would thank us gravely and invite us to come to their houses. Again and again we were obliged to refuse the kind hospitality of these good people, who would have given us all that was theirs to offer. Although they are so hospitable themselves, they never take our hospitality for granted, and it was with difficulty that we could make them understand that the empty tins, which had contained potted meat or salmon,

were not to be scalded and packed among our supplies. They drink very weak tea, and the way in which they would thank us for the small quantity of tea left in the tin bucket that served as our "teapot," was out of all proportion with the magnificence of the gift.

We were to leave Vera Welistchkina at Michaelowka, as she was needed in the North Colony, and, when I saw the quarters she was to share with Sacha Satz, my heart sank. Neither of them had any clothes suitable for the cold weather that was rapidly approaching, and they both looked so frail and young to face the privations that awaited them; not only the delicacy of their physiques, but their intensely sympathetic natures would render their sufferings acute. The women of the Doukhobortsi appeared to have accepted suffering as the common lot of humanity, and had conquered much of its bitterness by the calm dignity with which they recognized the inevitable, and simply labored from day to day doing their duty with unswerving fidelity to those near and dear to them, as well as to the community as a whole.

It was not so with these young Russian ladies. They resent greatly the terrible suffering that they are called upon to witness without the means of remedying it to any great extent. I fear they have been somewhat misled as to the amount of interest taken in the Doukhobortsi by Canadians as a whole, and they have been taught to imagine that, from the moment of the arrival in Canada, the way would be made smooth for these splendid people. They are unable to understand that, as a matter of policy, it would be unwise for the Government of a country like Canada to "spoon feed" a large influx of settlers in our western prairies. The committee of men who are looking after the settlement of these people do, however, recognize this fact, and are most anxious that the condition of these people should be ameliorated mainly by their own efforts; and, judging from the fruit of those efforts already evidenced, there is no doubt that the people recognize the wisdom of their advisers.

The Doukhobors themselves do not ask for "charity," and are only desirous for the opportunity to earn money. But the grave question arises as to how sufficient employment can be provided for fifteen hundred men during the winter months, to enable them to support the number of children and women dependent on them. The proportion

of women and children is not great when you consider the number of men exiled in Siberia, but when worked out according to the figures obtainable it appears that each man has more than his share of responsibility to shoulder.

The men who are working among them are inclined to believe in the capability of these people to keep famine at bay during the winter, but the Russian ladies who are among them are not so hopeful in their view of the situation, and the question is, which of these are right? Do the men, who are mainly organizing labor and passing rapidly from village to village, recognize the great need already existing? Vera Welistchkina has worked under the relief committee organized by Tolstoy during the last famine in Russia, as, I believe, have two of the other Russian ladies at present with the Doukhobortsi, and yet Vera Welistchkina is the one who regards the condition of the Doukhobortsi at present with the greatest apprehension. The Department of Immigration have won the warmest admiration from the people who have come out with the Doukhobortsi by their kindly and humane administration of affairs; but have the officials in Canada ever had to face a parallel situation, and are they fully alive to the difficulties that the winter may bring to these poor people, who have so long been subjected to privations calculated to undermine the strongest constitutions? This is a question which deserves much grave consideration.

Those who are working among the Doukhobortsi express an unwillingness to open subscriptions for the purpose of helping these people, so long as employment can be found which will enable them to help each other; for it must be borne in mind that, with a very few exceptions, all the villages are prepared to hold a common purse, and as far as I could ascertain the number of souls in each village amounted at the highest to three hundred, and at the lowest to one hundred and twenty. As long as these people keep true to their communistic principles, the privations they are subjected to cannot disturb the serenity of spirit that is so observable to the onlooker, but once there is an unequal distribution of the necessities of life, misery is to be seen depicted on their faces, and the whole atmosphere becomes changed.

V.

KAMENKA, SOUTH DOUKHOBOR COLONY, ASSA.

Beautiful beyond description was the view that greeted our eyes as we breakfasted in the open air before starting on our return journey to Fort Pelly. The village of Michaelowka must some day be the principal village in the North Doukhobor Colony. It already wore the air of prosperity, and the beauty of the site seemed to affect the general well-being of the community. The men of the village were early astir, setting out for their work in the communal garden and farm. Our Russian friends were still fast asleep when we left, as we had said adieu the night before, knowing that we had to make an early start.

Captain St. John was very anxious that we should call at a village on the left side of the river, where he wished to see some of the Doukhobortsi who had crossed the Atlantic with him. We passed over the same part of the river as on the previous day, and, after half an hour's drive through lovely country, found ourselves on the edge of the bank waiting for the raft that was to ferry us across to where a lot of brightly-clad women and children formed a welcome bit of color against the soft green of the willows on the farther bank.

We left our teamsters to look after the horses, and crossed the rapid-flowing river, all three of us keenly enjoying the beauty and novelty of the scene. The greetings between Captain St. John and his friends were very hearty, and we were immediately ushered into the best house in the village. In front of the house there were a number of the women's winter coats hung out to air, and comfortable coats they were, very thick and well made. The tightly-fitting coat part was exceedingly well cut, and they each and all had full skirts bordered with a kind of curled lambskin. Captain St. John tells me that the women are all capital tailoresses, and certainly the cut of the men's coats gave one the impression of being the work of skilled labor.

The Doukhobortsi have as a rule an excellent idea of harmony in design; all their work is even and symmetrical to a degree. The very form of the women's headdress has

a certain curve which indicates that the eye is as well trained in the matter of symmetry as the ear is attuned in the matter of harmony. This is very remarkable among a people who have neither books nor pictures. In all my sojourning among them I never saw either a book or a picture; but their delight in color is most noticeable. Their gala dresses are a blaze of color, and even the tiny children are as gay as a garden of poppies. It is very delightful, this mass of brilliant coloring against the transparency of the prairie atmosphere, and the note of color added to the picture by a group of Doukhobor women in one of the great hay meadows has a value easily to be recognized.

Before we left, the address, which Miss Alma T. Dale had brought to the Doukhobors from the Ontario Society of Friends, was read to a group of the villagers by Captain St. John, who had translated it into Russian. I watched curiously the faces of the group as they drank in the kindly words of welcome from their Canadian brethren. The men stood with uncovered heads, listening intently, and they all appeared to appreciate the sympathy and good-will of which they were assured.

It is rather difficult to place oneself in the position of these people, who regard brotherly love and its outward expression as the practical manifestation of the Divine Being dwelling within each individual. We, who appreciate brotherly love only when it takes the form of material aid, are inclined to deride their great desire for the constant recognition of universal brotherhood in its widest sense. To try and explain just what the religious belief of the Doukhobortsi is would be to undertake a task unsuited for a newcomer among them. There appears to be a great diversity of opinion as to their belief, but, whatever its character, there is no doubt that its result is excellent so far as an onlooker can judge. That is, if sobriety, honesty and orderliness in every sense of the word are excellent.

Amiel has defined tact as "a spirit of kindness," and there is some quality possessed by these people that inspires one with confidence and a feeling of security. Before the true spirit of universalism the barrier of language and nationality counts for nothing, and this is a great factor in the promise they give of becoming part of the heterogeneous mass of people who enroll themselves under the title of "Canadians."

The address having been read, we were invited to have a look at the great garden, which, like all the others I have seen, was kept clear of weeds. I cannot say much for the condition of the vegetables, however. The land had only been broken that spring, and as the season was a late one I fear they had not much chance of reaping any great reward for their labors in the immense garden patch. Cucumbers there were, and a few very feeble young squashes, but they would not have time to reach maturity before the snow fell. We were presented with two or three cucumbers in spite of our remonstrance, and as we were leaving a bunch of young onions was brought to the raft.

Before leaving I managed to buy one of the curious wooden irons which I have previously described. It was ornamented with a pattern carved roughly in low relief, and I asked the name of the carver, hoping to be able to send him a proper set of carving tools to use during the winter days when outdoor employment was not to be found. I am curious to know where "Fedor Voiken" had found the design for his carving, as it bore a resemblance to the marginal work to be found on illuminated manuscripts. If the design had once been seen and then carried in the memory, the result would indicate that their system of education has a deeper value than at first appears to the onlooker.

We were escorted to the raft by the whole concourse of villagers, and as we swung out into the stream the crowd of women and men on shore broke into a chorus of song, which lasted until we were all packed in our waggons ready for departure.

The day had become terribly hot, and an almost tropical sun blazed down, and when we halted to take our midday meal we were obliged to get out the tent and stretch it over the two waggons to form some sort of a shelter. When at lunch, a great waggon loaded with flour for the north village passed us, the tired oxen and the one horse (harnessed unicorn) panting with the heat. The two men in care of the load were very thankful to have a chat with Captain St John, and were profuse in their thanks for the lunch we insisted on sharing with them.

It will be indeed a splendid thing for the North Colony when the Dauphin line comes within reasonable distance of the village of Michaelowka, and these long journeys from Yorkton with supplies are no longer necessary.

It was sundown when we reached Fort Pelly, and we found that Mr. Mackenzie, a fur trader and dealer in general merchandise, had considerably left his great tent standing, ready for us to "turn in" without the trouble of pitching our own camp.

After supper I had a long chat with Mr. Mackenzie, and found him most interesting and enthusiastic on the subject of the Doukhobortsi as settlers for that part of the country. He had in his employ at that date two young Doukhobor men, who, he said, gave great satisfaction, although when they first came he imagined they were not going to be what are called it that part of the world "hustlers." He soon found, however, that the trouble had been insufficient nourishment, and that just as soon as they had good plain food, with a certain degree of variety to insure good health, they were quite equal to any "white man." He also gave them an excellent character for honesty; having had, as he said, every kind of foreigner round that part of the world, he was able to form an opinion of human nature pretty accurately, and his experience led him to state without hesitation that he had never in the whole course of his career met a more honest people than the Doukhobortsi.

As to the matter of their not eating meat, Mr. Mackenzie was very positive that it was only a matter of time, and they must bow to the law of necessity and recognize that self-preservation is the first law of nature. However, the writer is not inclined to advise any kind of proselytism, for the restraint which they exercise over their appetites in this respect (which can hardly be called part of their religion) may be an aid to the practical working of their moral code, and, as this is an undoubtedly high one, it is better to "leave well alone."

By some people dissatisfaction has been expressed that these people should be allowed to settle in villages rather than each man on his own homestead. To those who are familiar with the great unsettled area on the outskirts of the arable lands, there can be no question as to village life being the one best calculated to develop the country on permanent lines. The growing distaste for agriculture as a means of livelihood is greatly due to the isolation that such a following entails, and the Mennonites have proved that farming can be carried on on successful lines by men who live with their families in the villages, and the prob-

lem of education is solved in this way. As for the actual farming, the putting in of crops and the taking off in the autumn, if done on a communal system, do not at all necessitate the farm lands being close to the village. In many countries the seeding and reaping are performed by the villagers *en masse*, and the concerted effort insures the safety of the crop.

There is much else to be said in favor of the village communities. There is a vast amount of respect paid to the opinions of older men, and a certain discipline is observable not altogether from religious principles, but also from the force exercised by public opinion as represented in village life.

For the young people especially the village life is the healthiest and happiest, and it is to be hoped that the policy of the Government will be to promote in every way the unification of these people, who bid fair to serve a most useful purpose in the settlement of the great western districts of the Dominion.

VI.

SOUTH DOUKHOBOR COLONY, NEAR STONY CREEK, ASSA., September 4th.

We left Fort Pelly soon after sunrise, as we were anxious to reach the village of Michaelowka before sunset that evening. Our route lay through a tract of country bordering on the Assiniboine River, that marvellous snake that turns and twists its brilliant coils through endless distance. The length of the road to be traversed and the condition of the trails (owing to heavy rains) prevented our being able to visit many of the villages scattered along the farther bank of the river.

It was a drive never to be forgotten. The heavy dew of the night before lay like a veil of grey chiffon over the landscape, and as the lazy midsummer sun lifted itself from a rose-colored cloud bed, the veil shivered and sparkled as though sprinkled with diamond dust. Through tangled copsewood we drove for hours, now and then skirting a "slough" (pronounced slew), encircled with a great belt of rushes, standing with uplifted torches of velvety brown. Swish! whirr! and a flight of duck passed over our heads, sprinkling us with water as they flew.

Again emerging from the wonderful "prairie jungle," our eyes were dazzled by a veritable "field of cloth of gold," the transparent petals of the graceful prairie sunflowers showing acres of molten gold against the sky-line of deepest blue, a magnificent note of color in contrast to the masses of mauve Michaelmas daisies, growing to a height and luxuriance never seen in Ontario. This regal robe of gold and purple was here and there decorated with what in the distance looked like great bunches of white ostrich feathers, but which on closer inspection proved to be of the same family as the mauve daisy, which with their tiny closed blossoms formed luxuriant clusters on the long, slender stalks that swayed heavily tipped in the breeze.

Now and then a hay meadow girt about with a circle of low-growing wolf willows made a study in tender greens that would have delighted the eye of a Whistler. It was hard to realize that all was not the work of some master-hand at landscape gardening, so wonderful was the effect produced by the massing of color and constant change of scene.

A perfect trellis of morning glories in delicate tender shades of pink and mauve covered at times the low shrubs bordering our route, and here and there a brilliant mass of deep crimson berries showed themselves against the background of the tangled underbrush. "Bush cranberries!" exclaimed our driver, as he handed me a great branch of the drooping berries among their lance-cut leaves. I recognized at once one of the ornamental shrubs much prized in our eastern gardens, and was delighted to learn that this great prairie garden was prepared to supply more than a "feast of colors."

Black currants of excellent flavor were to be found in quantities on the river bank, and the cranberries would prove a most health-giving food for the Doukhobor people. My companion, Vera Welistchkina, informed me that cranberries were much used in Russia, and in fact on comparing notes we found that we had here many plants and fruits and flowers that grew in central Russia. Mushrooms are very plentiful in her country, and the Doukhobortsi have suffered slightly in the west owing to their eagerness to discover the "edible fungi" of this country, one small lad nearly losing his life in rashly experimenting in this direction.

Towards noon we found ourselves obliged to cross a

decidedly awkward piece of ground, or rather bog, called in that part of the world a "coulee," which is in reality a tiny off-shoot from a river, a creek that finds an outlet through a small gully, and chooses to filter through the soft, quaking earth below the treacherous "hummocks" or tufts of coarse grass. In many cases these tiny quagmires have cost an inexperienced man a good horse. Once let the beast sink over a foot, and there is no chance of getting him out again.

By a stroke of good luck we managed to get through, and the men of our party went back with axes to mend the "bridge," as they called the heap of scrub willow piled five feet deep on the surface of the quaking black ground. We had passed a party of Doukhobortsi coming from Yorkton with a heavy load of flour, destined for the North Colony. Their team consists of a yoke of oxen with one horse driven "unicorn." The bridge, frail as it appeared, served its purpose, and the next day we met the oxen at the very spot, but happily on the right side; the crossing having been accomplished in safety.

The Russians nearly always drive three horses abreast in their own country, and a man's great ambition in some parts is to harness as many horses to his chariot as is possible. In this country these poor people are at present content to have one horse between, perhaps, ten families. Apropos of this subject, the question of whether it was best to expend any money given for cattle on horses or oxen became one of importance, and led to some discussion among those authorized to purchase the animals for the Doukhobortsi. The usual impression among practical men in the West is that for the purpose of breaking land, etc., oxen are far better than horses, while a certain section maintain that, in a country where the season is so short, and time is of such value, it is absurd to use the slower-footed animal.

On the other hand, the staying powers of the oxen are superior, and these animals do not require half the care or nourishment of a horse, besides which, in the later part of his career, the ox attracts the attention of the large meat-packing establishments in the States; though there are rumors to the effect that many of the ancient farm horses near the border fetch a very fair price in the same market! Judging from observation, the writer is inclined to think that a larger percentage of oxen are to be found among the villages at the present moment.

VII.

YORKTON, ASSA., September 6th.

Once again we had bidden Mr. Mackenzie, of Fort Pelly, adieu, feeling convinced that he was prepared to be a friend to the Doukhobor people, of whom he spoke in terms of the warmest praise, though constantly lamenting the fact that they were not sensible enough to eat meat. The hardships of the coming winter, he prophesied, would be greatly aggravated by their refusing the diet necessary for a northern people.

I cannot say that we had passed an excellent night before starting on our homeward journey. The mosquitos, and other insects less noisy, though equally vicious in their assaults, gave us little rest, and we were not sorry to see the dawn. It had been a close night, following a sultry day, and one was glad to throw open the flaps of the tent and breathe the fresh morning air. The dew had drenched everything and seemed to have even penetrated the thick canvas of the tent.

There is a rule which ought to be impressed on those who delight to dwell in tents—never under any circumstances leave your boots out to be blackened. Put them in the pocket of your ulster (that is if you wear number twos) or put them under your pillow, but never leave them to keep lonely vigil on the box of supplies; it does not pay.

It was well past noon when we halted close to the ford where we were to cross the Assiniboine river. We had passed through the Côté Indian reserve, meeting on our way some of the Indians coming in for Sunday service on the morrow to the little chapel at the Agency. A curious lot they were, huddled under their blankets and carefully carrying their Sunday finery in their hands. Nearly all their log houses were deserted, as they prefer to spend the summer in their "tepees," and here and there among the trees the smoke from the cone-shaped dwellings rose blue in the air. The Indian farms appeared fairly well cultivated, though in many cases the crops had been left apparently standing too long, the Indians being employed in another part of the country taking in the crops of the white men.

Cronstadt appeared to be a place of considerable importance, and Captain St. John told us that a number of the Doukhobor men had been working there digging the foundations for an addition to the mission school. We had intended paying a visit to the mission, but the length of time at our disposal made it impossible.

While we were lunching, sheltered from the high wind by the tent stretched across the two waggon, a sudden shower came on, and we were obliged to wait much longer than we had anticipated before crossing the river.

It was late in the afternoon when we drew up at a hospitable farm-house not very distant from the first Doukhobor village we had struck at the beginning of the trip. Here we found a hospitable old lady, over eighty, sitting by a cosy fire in the great kitchen stove. The log house was snug and warm, and we were glad enough to rest for a few minutes while we made a few purchases of fresh bread and delicious butter.

It was very pleasant to hear the kind words that all the womenkind of the household had to say for our Doukhobor friends, though they had not a very cheerful account to give of the health of the community nearest them. A tremendous amount of fever, they said, and the chilly days seemed to aggravate the disease. They found the women friendly and ready to give a helping hand whenever required to do so, and the gratitude of the villagers, they informed us, was very touching.

There is one splendid thing about the women of that great lone country, and that is their readiness to appreciate the good qualities of the women who come their way. If there was any grumbling about the incoming people from Europe it was not from the women of the country. They are delighted to have a number of their own sex who can understand the thousand and one little things that go to make the freemasonry that exists among the home-loving women of our country. It is all very well to speak of the men being the real pioneers of the new countries, but in truth it is the women who make settlement in the far West a permanent and prosperous matter. The help and aid that these daughters of the soil, pioneers by force of circumstances for years past, are to be to the lonely women of our prairies is not to be calculated. There is something in their demeanor that brings confidence and a feeling of comradeship, and this is not felt in regard to all the women

that have come into our country of late. I was greatly struck with the hearty good-will with which the thrifty old Scotch lady spoke of the women and the way in which they had faced the privations of prairie settlement.

It was bitterly cold when we drew up at the village where we were to pass the night. The entire population were busy building their houses, and they insisted that we should occupy a house just in course of completion, where the Russian nurses had slept the night before. These two women had gone on to another village, where the fever was still worse. Captain St. John was suffering from a severe attack at that moment, owing to the chill that had resulted after our long, cold drive.

We quickly lighted our campfire and began to prepare our supper, inviting the people who had kindly lent us their house to sup with us. I hope they enjoyed the repast. It was a pleasure to us to fill up their plates with a steaming stew of tomato and bread crumbs, and to pour out great smoking cups of tea. There were neither windows nor a door to our abode, and the plaster was still wet on the walls.

Half the population was still under canvas, and I hope that before they attempted to occupy their houses the great clay-built ovens had been kept going for days at a time. Their hospitality in asking us to occupy their newly-built house was undoubted, but of our wisdom in accepting that hospitality I am not so sure. Poor souls, they brought all the gorgeous bedding they could find, and spreading a layer of thick white felt on the board shelf that ran down one side of the house, they piled thereon brilliant scarlet cushions and a many-colored quilt for our use. I am afraid that even a thick layer of fur robes and Hudson Bay blankets did not make us forget that we slept on a series of poplar poles resembling a corduroy road. While we were preparing for the night, the sound of a child's bitter wailing told us that something was wrong, for Doukhobor children, as a rule, are not given to crying for trifles. Our investigation caused us to think deeply over the cause that had brought these people to our shores.

A young mother had been suddenly stricken with the fever, and they had deemed it best to move her from her own house (which was not finished) to one of the larger tents. In the hurry attending our arrival they had for-

gotten to tell her little son that she had been moved. He ran in from a neighboring house to find his mother. She was gone. The Cossacks had taken her. He had seen strange men and horses come to the village, and the old terror froze that little lad's heart. To comfort him, he had to be shown his poor fever-tortured mother, safe in a friendly tent.

It gave one something to think about, and conjured up a vision that one cannot associate with the splendid freedom of our Canadian land. I had no remedies with me that were worthy of the name, but we gave the poor woman a hot drink, and later on a dose of phenacetine, hoping it might give relief to the agonizing headache that is one of the worst symptoms of the fever.

We retired to our house, and, greatly interested in our novel surroundings, we examined each bit of work in the course of completion. "Good work, all of it," was the verdict of my companion (no mean judge of carpentering, as I afterwards discovered).

The room must have been ten by fifteen, and the sloping roof six feet from the floor at the lowest part. The central beam was utilized to sustain a sort of hanging shelf that proved a most useful receptacle. Several stout wooden pegs, such as we use for harness, were fitted into the upright poles that supported the weight of the double sod roof, the ceiling being neatly plastered with clay worked into a sort of cement mixed with fine chopped grass. The floor was trodden hard and swept as clean as a board.

The hole left in the roof for the chimney we closed in a most ingenious manner, and one which nearly caused the loss of a valuable umbrella. The umbrella was poked through the hole, then opened, and a bag of hardtack tied to the handle to keep it from sailing away. It was, however, only the sharp eyes of our hostess that prevented our leaving it behind with its ballast of hardtack. I have often wondered since what insane freak induced two sensible women to sleep in that dripping wet house, an experiment worthy only of lunatics,

Next morning we were to attend the religious service held soon after sunrise in one of the newly-built houses. The room or house chosen was just about in the condition of the one we had slept in, and in spite of great anxiety to see the whole of their religious service, I could not help insisting that my friend, who was quite used up after

the night spent in such an atmosphere, should have a cup of tea. When we arrived at the house where the people were, we found Captan St. John (still wretchedly ill) waiting for us, and about ten men and perhaps twenty women in their best Sunday frocks, ranged in two rows on either side of the room. The reason given by these people for not having a distinct place of worship is, I believe, that they say "God dwells in a temple not made by human hands, but in the breast of every worthy servant." The great dignity of these people and their intense seriousness during the singing and recitation of their psalms was exceedingly edifying. But not being able to either understand or join in the prayers gave one a most uncomfortable sensation, and the feeling that they must regard us as inquisitive intruders.

Shall I ever forget the impression made upon us that intensely cold morning, as the women sang bravely, one with lips blue from cold and cheeks hollow from the ravages of fever and the want of nourishment? They keep no written record of their psalms, but hand them down from generation to generation.

The women wore over their gala dresses a long dark blue coat of serge, the sleeves almost covering the hands, and closely buttoned up to the throat. The usual headdress is replaced for the occasion by a close-fitting white headdress covered with a wine-colored kerchief neatly tied over the white cap. The men, in their dark blue military tunics, are neatness itself, and the only mark of distinction between their ordinary dress and that worn on Sunday is the border of embroidery that edges the tight trouser as it laps over the instep, like the present fashionable cuff to our sleeves.

They were very trim, these men, in their appearance, and the village barber had been busy on Saturday night, while the bath house had all Saturday been filled with bathers, as the "Saturday tub" is quite a feature of their social life. It is most curious to see if their cleanly habits will survive the rigor of winter in the far west, and one cannot help feeling doubtful as to the wisdom of steam baths with the thermometer anywhere below zero. Russian peasants as a rule are not conspicuous for cleanliness, I believe, but these people take the saying, that "cleanliness is next to godliness" in the literal sense, the result being their taking the greatest trouble to keep both their person and clothing clean.

Before the service was over I ran back to our campfire and hastily brewed a large pail of weak tea for the women who were listening with deepest interest to the address my plucky little friend had begged Captain St. John to read to them. I say "plucky," for the experience of the night before had resulted in an acute attack of neuralgia, and she was fairly blind with suffering.

All that could be left of supplies was distributed among the people, and the condensed milk that Mrs. Dale gave to the women brought a flush of joy to their faces. It would do for the sick. Poor souls, they thought little of themselves.

We stopped for a few minutes at a village built literally in the side of a hill, the people having come there early in the season and built the best houses they were able to under the circumstances. They were moving to a new site over the brow of the hill and building better houses, well ventilated and lighted. All the people were in their Sunday clothes. In some cases they had attempted to make little gardens in front of their sod homes. The appearance of the village was inferior to anything we had yet seen, and as the day was cold and a drizzling rain driving in our faces, the impression conveyed was not a pleasant one. But the condition of the people could not affect their respect for Sunday observances, and there was nothing that the most strict Sabbatarian could have found fault with in their demeanor.

I wonder, if we were shut off from the great body of our co-religionists and living as these people are, on the far outskirts of civilization, would we, as a people, be so punctilious in the observance of Sunday?

The remainder of the supplies Mrs. Dale had with her were given to these people, and what they valued most was a bag of salt. Salt is a great luxury, and there appeared to be a great scarcity of it among the villages.

We had seen the last of the villages in the South Colony and I regret to say that the impression was a pretty sad one on that bleak hillside.

We drew up at the house of a rancher not many miles from Yorkton to feed the horses and take our mid-day meal. We had really two invalids by this time, both Captain St. John and Mrs. Dale being quite ill. We found the snug "shack" guarded by two splendid deer hounds, but they proved as hospitable as the owner could have

been, and let us enter without even a growl. "Gone to see his girl," ejaculated our driver, "but that makes no difference." It evidently did not, for I found my poor little companion, who had preceded us, fast asleep under her fur robes on the bed of our absent host. We lighted the kitchen stove, set our table and spent a cosy hour over the luncheon. Every one felt better for the rest and warmth of that hospitable shack.

A really select library hung over the table, and I at once recognized the hand of the Aberdeen Association that is doing such splendid work among the lonely ranchers in that far-off country.

It was sunset when we again struck the high road that led to Yorkton. Here our little party broke up. I was going on next day to the Good Spirit Lake district, but, unfortunately, was not to have the companionship of Mrs. Dale, who declared she had seen enough to make her want to get to work at once and devise means whereby the Ontario Friends could give instant and efficient aid to these splendid people. My mission was in a different direction, and I could not help envying her the chance which lay in her kindly and practical hands of giving immediate aid to the people.

I found Mr. Crerar, the Immigration Agent, greatly interested in all we had to report regarding the condition of the people, and he lost no time in making admirable arrangements for my start next morning. Yorkton seems the centre of Europe at the present moment, and one could open a college for European languages with the greatest ease if so disposed.

It is a great pity that some patron of Canadian art cannot see his way to sending an artist corps to paint the different people in their national costumes before they succumb to the process of assimilation with the Canadian people, which, I regret to say, is a much too rapid process as regards the adoption of Canadian clothing. The picturesque costumes which are to be seen about Yorkton are doomed to extinction before two years have passed. Possibly, from a political point of view, this is rather a good thing, but on the other hand, the national costume has a value in indicating a certain standard in dress, the result being a definite effect to aim for. Consequently, their picturesque dresses mean a desirable amount of self-respect. The love of color and artistic adornment surely

indicates a better condition of healthy instinct than does the indiscriminate mass of color and form that we are pleased to call "Canadian fashions."

The Doukhobor men, who had good suits of dark blue serge, were far better dressed than any other men of their class I saw in the west, and in every respect these people showed their keen appreciation of really good material. What they had was good—no shoddy. Perhaps this came from the fact that the hand labor, which demanded time, was employed on raw material of the best quality only; that mechanical appliances have meant the introduction of several classes of raw material, the consequence being a deterioration in the quality of goods used by our people as a whole. Then again, the constant change of fashion among all classes renders the market for one durable and costly line of material uncertain. There are certain arguments in favor of a national costume, which, from an artistic point, are undeniable, and from this standpoint it is greatly to be regretted that these national costumes are doomed to extinction.

VIII.

YORKTON, ASSA., September 7th.

We were bound for the Doukhobor colony at "Good Spirit Lake," according to the map, or "Devil's Lake," as the inhabitants call it. The Indians are, I fancy, responsible for the latter appellation, as, like the Chinese, all "spirits" are to them "devils."

The morning was cold and a bitter wind blew in our faces. The drive was, however, interesting, and so was the young Dutch gentleman who had kindly consented to act as our "whip." It was like a page from the books of Maarten Maartens to listen to the description of life at The Hague, where his father was something "in waiting" to the Prince of Weid, whose son was reported to be the aspirant for the hand of the young Queen of Holland.

We drove for hours through a grass country, passing many men cutting hay round the margin of the immense sloughs. Now and then we missed the trail owing to the wind-bent grass obliterating all marks of the wheels that had passed through before.

I was greatly interested in this Doukhobor settlement,

as before leaving Ontario I had read an irate letter from a settler in this district, complaining that at least a hundred settlers were obliged to leave on account of the incoming "serfs." So I was most anxious to see for myself the condition of affairs that was so vehemently set forth in that letter.

It was nearly midday when we reached the shores of the Good Spirit Lake, a tiny inland sea, to-day lashed by the wind into a mass of thick wool-like foam. The trail led along the heavy sand of the shore at the head of the lake, and for miles there was hardly a house to be seen; nothing but low bluffs and the stretches of sand covered with flying flecks of this curd-like foam. I can't help fancying that the water must be impregnated with some mineral substance that would account for the peculiar character of the foam, that was as tough as the whipped white of egg.

The lake is looked upon as the future summer resort of that thriving little cosmopolis, Yorkton, and fairly good fishing and shooting are to be found in the vicinity.

After an hour's drive along the lake shore we came upon the ranch where we proposed to "put up" for lunch. In spite of our arrival being most inopportune, we had a kindly welcome from the mother of the young rancher, whom we found busy with his haying.

Our host and hostess were keenly alive to the drawback of having such a large number of settlers coming into their part of the country. They had been in the country for twelve years, and were, in truth, squatters, not having "taken out their papers," as people in that part of the world call it. It did seem rather hard that they should have to move farther north after so many years spent on their ranch, but our hostess with perfect candor admitted that the nationality of the incoming people had nothing to do with the question. A rancher must give way before close settlement, and she had nothing but kindly words for the Doukhobor people, to whom she had been most kind, trying to give them what help she could, and finding them ready to do all in their power to return her neighborly attention.

It is needless to recall the difficulty that the different administrations have had with the ranching community in the west, and the natural antipathy that those whose cattle range on free land have towards the incoming

settlers who propose to take up mixed farming, and consequently fence in the land.

The story my hostess had to tell of her own experience was most interesting. She was the widow of a sea captain, and had travelled round the world on her husband's ship. After his death she had brought her young family out to Canada and invested her capital in cattle. The result was apparently satisfactory, and, as she belonged to that splendid type of pioneer women who have in reality made our country what it is, she was able to appreciate the traits which the Doukhobor women possessed in common with all home-loving women.

I was anxious to find out if the letter which I had read with much interest in a Toronto paper had been authorized, as it were, by the settlers of the district, but I found that the writer was not a *persona grata* with my hostess, and I learned that the exaggerated terms in which the letter had been couched had disgusted the educated settlers in the district. On enquiry I found that there were only about twenty families in the whole district, and the nationality of the incoming people had nothing to do with their seeking fresh pastures.

Later on I met the author of the letter in the midst of a most wonderful hay meadow, and I felt quite sympathetic with his desire to retain for his own use as much as possible of this beautiful park-like country. I had been warned that the subject of the Doukhobortsi would rouse him to a degree not to be desired, but I did not find his conversation as violent as the epistle signed with his name. It was simply a difference of opinion regarding the immigration policy of our country. I found Mr. —'s dislike to all foreigners an inherited trait, handed down from the age when England was an insular power, and not the Imperial realm of to-day that holds within its grasp all nationalities and creeds. It does one's heart good, however, to see the Union Jack waved with mighty vehemence, just so long as the violence does not render the Cross, which forms its base, an unmeaning smudge of color, rather than a significant emblem.

It is a mistake to suppose that the Doukhobortsi are either ignorant "serfs" or of low moral standard. The constant war between flesh and spirit, which has earned them the name of "spirit wrestlers," has not been earned without a struggle, and that struggle has left its imprint

on their faces and sharpened their intelligence to an extraordinary degree. Their working out of life's deep problems would astonish many a man who has followed out the same line of thought with the aid of many books.

The practice of such a religion has never attracted many followers, and the people are content to exhort and constantly urge to higher forms of practice among themselves, without trying to preach their gospel to the world at large. The religion is in itself obscure, but its practice is most simple. In the "Empire of the Tsars" Leroy-Beaulieu sums up the essence of their religion in a few simple words. "The prophet Pobirokhin," he remarks, "one of their spiritual leaders in the eighteenth century, is said to have explicitly taught that God does not exist by Himself, but is inseparable from man. It is for the righteous, in a way, to give Him life." A curious doctrine, but one which seems to be the mainspring of their innate dignity and wondrous patience, one that conduces to sobriety and all the virtues that make these people a desirable element in any community.

Their faith in regard to a future state reminds the writer of the famous *mot* of one of the most brilliant women in France, who, when questioned as to her belief in a future state of bliss, replied: "Ah, who can say? To insure certainty, I make my paradise here below."

The reverence that these people pay to the rites belonging to burial has resemblance to those observed by the primitive Christians. We happened to reach our stopping place for the night just as our hostess had returned from a Doukhobor funeral at a village seven miles farther on. The story she had to tell us, was intensely sad. Ten days before several of the women had come to her ranch bringing with them one of their older women who was suffering terribly from a felon on her hand. Mrs. B——, our hostess, knew little about medical science, for, as she said, "the one thing about the prairies is, that there is seldom sickness to be heard of, and doctors do not thrive." However, she did what she could, and poulticed the poor hand, making the sufferer put it in a sling.

A day or so after she went to the village and again put on a hot poultice, and thought the patient looked better, but at sundown the previous evening they had come in hot haste for her, and she saw her husband showing unmistakable signs of trouble, and they arrived to find

the poor woman breathing her last, evidently having succumbed to blood poisoning. "It was heart-breaking," she said, "to think that a lance might have saved that poor woman's life." Then she went on to tell me all the details of the funeral and the last sad duties that were performed for the dead.

It was just as the sun went down, and we had shut the door between the tidy living room and the kitchen while we washed up the supper dishes, and I will always retain in my memory the womanly, tender way in which my bright young hostess told me, with hushed voice, of the way the death and burial of that poor woman had impressed her. She had wished that some of her Anglo-Saxon neighbors had been there to see the gentle, loving reverence with which the Doukhobortsi treat their dead. Where the men had got the lumber she did not know, but the simple coffin appeared as if by magic, with its stainless white linen sheet, and crimson pillow for the poor cold form. "They seemed very poor," she said, "but they had laid their mother out in spotless clothing. No detail of the toilet was forgotten; the poor discolored hand was hidden beneath a richly embroidered handkerchief. A service was held in the house, and then two daughters, the son and son's wife lifted the coffin high on their shoulders, and although the way was long, the trail rough and unbroken, they carried their dear one to the grave, which was neatly prepared with boughs and leaves to hide the newly turned earth. Men bearing the lid of the coffin followed, and after further recitation of Psalms at the grave they knelt in prayer. There was a heart-breaking farewell taken of their dear dead, and the lid was at last fastened and the coffin was gently lowered into the grave."

No one left the grave until it was neatly covered with sods and branches. Then they insisted that Mrs. B—— should come back to the village to have some refreshments. There a long table was set, with the little they had to offer laid on a fine linen table-cloth. It was a sad feast, she said, and after it was over they tried in every way to express to her their gratitude for her sympathy and neighborly kindness. The son of the poor woman brought her a handkerchief that his mother had worked for him, and insisted on her taking it as a keepsake. "They are such grateful people," she kept repeating. "Fancy! My husband lent them his waggon for some work, and when they

brought it back; they signed to ask 'How much?' Of course, we would not take anything, so the girls who had drawn it six miles—think of it, four girls; the men and horse were all hard at work—these girls came back the day after, and shyly brought out three of their best pieces of linen as a gift just for the loan of a waggon."

Mrs. B—— was known as the best housekeeper in the district, and her interest and delight in these people knew no bounds. They were trying hard to learn a little English. She said the way the women remembered the names of various kitchen utensils she showed them was a marvel.

I found her, in truth, delighted to have these villages near their ranch, as she told me that both she and her husband found them interesting to a degree. The men they had had working for them gave great satisfaction, and as their "chore boy," a young English gentleman, had gone north, they had taken a Doukhobor boy in his place, and she was amazed at the amount of work he took off her hands.

It was a very pleasant evening that we spent in that cosy log house, and the result was that our hostess expressed herself more than willing to dispense any medicine or comforts that we might be able to send her for the fever-stricken people in the villages during the winter. "There isn't much room in here," she said, but "I will turn my dairy into a store-house, if you like." We sat late looking over her own beautiful hand-sewing, and discussing the women who had such a hard winter before them. For their work she had a great admiration, and was preparing to learn some of the knitted lace and drawn work at which they are so proficient.

We had to make an early start in the morning, and much to our disgust we found a pouring rain confronting us. However, we went to some of the farther villages. One in particular impressed me so sadly. A group of men and women came up to the carriage to speak to Captain St. John, and to tell him that the letters which had been received from Russia spoke of the hopelessness of getting their dear ones liberated from Siberia. There were several of the women and girls whose husbands and fathers were in exile, and the pitiful expression of their faces as they told their sad story will remain on my mind for many a day.

An impulse that was irresistible made me beg Captain

St. John to tell them that their young Russian Empress was the child of our Queen's most loved and gentle daughter, and that I knew the day would come, and not far distant, when the knowledge of how and why they suffered would reach her ears, and that the daughter of the loved Princess Alice would, in the memory of that great sorrow that left her motherless, restore their dear ones to them.

One so associates all that is most sacred and closest in family ties with our own royal house, that I spoke the words I felt to be true. God grant they may prove so!

The weather turned out so bad that we had to hasten our return to Yorkton, hurriedly passing through the villages on our homeward way.

It was late when we returned to Yorkton, and on our way we met the husband of our hostess of the night before. We chatted for a time, and I learned from him that he lamented as greatly as others did the exaggerated and injudicious letter sent to the Ontario papers, which tended to prejudice the Canadian people against a law-abiding and worthy people who have sought sanctuary in our great western country—a country so vast that in two or three years, when these people have gained confidence and gone off one by one to claim their homesteads, they will be swallowed up in what is now an immense unbroken tract of country, each one doing his share in moulding the fortunes of our great Dominion.

IX.

TORONTO, December.

Canada is fast becoming a great country, and, as the people of a great country, Canadians are called upon to face new problems in regard to the settlement of their land. The mass of the Canadian people have heard of the advent of the unfortunate exiles from the Caucasus and Cyprus; but beyond the fact that the Canadian Government has seen fit to bring these people in large numbers to the North-west of Canada, they in reality know little of the importance of the step taken by the Department of Immigration to settle a hitherto unoccupied part of the Dominion.

Never before has the Department been called upon to face the difficulties that at this moment beset their path.

The official corps have had six months of tremendous responsibility, and it can be said to their credit that they have accomplished wonders. The cry that the Government had introduced a pauper immigration appeared at the first glance not without justification, for in truth these people had been deprived of almost the bare necessities of existence, and the unhappy result is apparent to the most casual onlooker; but the work done by these people during the last eight months, work accomplished in spite of great physical weakness and fever, loudly proclaims the fact that these are no paupers who claim the right to enroll themselves as Canadians. Wherever they have been life has been sustained by the effort of their own hands, and the liberty of spirit that made them the victims of persecution has rendered them serfs in name only, and has kept them from sharing the degradation of their class in Russia. The power that Christianity in its truest sense has of civilizing, in our acceptance of the word, is made manifest in this instance. These people, deprived of even the few necessities of life common to the children of the soil, hunted from pillar to post, made to herd like beasts of the field, beaten, ill-treated, mothers separated from their children and wives from their husbands, are to-day the most polite, orderly people it is possible to imagine. The villages they are building testify to the powers of organization and inherent orderliness of the people; the results of self-discipline are apparent in the people as a unit, and the very core of their religious convictions is self-restraint.

The absence of anything like noisiness or excitability strikes one the instant one moves about among the villages. The very children are curiously quiet and gentle in their mode of play, and they are miniatures of their elders in more than their picturesque costume. The quiet dignity noticeable comes from the best possible influence, the parents having apparently little trouble in training their children other than by the example of their own quiet and industrious lives. There is something unutterably pathetic to those who live in this wrangling, noisy world of the nineteenth century to see the women and children of the Doukhobortsi quietly and silently bearing with a great patience the load that is laid upon their shoulders. The innate dignity of the women and their uncomplaining, untiring patience have perhaps been the reason that they

have had strength given them to endure to the end trials that their magnificent physique could not alone have enabled them to withstand. They are a great people—that is undeniable; and while they are the children of the soil they are the aristocracy of the soil, people who, to use Ruskin's words, have found that "all true art is sacred, and in all hand labor there is something of divineness." Their hand labor is marvellous, from the finest embroidery to the building and plastering of their houses.

The situation that the majority found themselves placed in was one which called for decisive action, and the Doukhobor women, as all great-hearted women must, rose to the occasion; and it is to them, as it ever was to the great pioneer women of our country, that we are to look for the best results in the settlement of our Dominion. The men of each community were called upon to hire themselves out as farm laborers and railway navvies. The distances in the West are enormous, and it meant simply the exodus of the men from the villages, and an absence that was to be counted by weeks or months. Then, too, in a village of perhaps a hundred and twenty souls they might have a yoke of oxen or one pair of horses, and these were to plough, and carry lumber for the frames of houses, and, more than all, transport flour from a great distance to feed the community. The question was a grave one; winter comes quickly in these latitudes. But the question was answered by the women, who turned to, helped the few men left in the village to build the houses, and not only trod the mortar and used their hands as trowels, but carted the logs, drawing them for miles with the aid of two simple little wooden wheels, which were no bigger than those of a child's go-cart. The earth for the mortar was carried on their backs in baskets woven of willow or in huge platters hewn out of logs; the water was carried at times for half a mile in two buckets hewn like platters out of trunks of trees and hung at the end of a long sapling. A deep trench was dug, and by the edge sat a score of women less strong than their Spartan sisters, chopping with a rude hatchet hay or grass to mix with the water in the trench or pit. Bucket after bucket of water was poured in from the primitive wooden pails, while six women with skirts kilted up nearly to their waists trod the mortar until it was as smooth as paste. Another gang of women carried it in the wooden troughs to the houses, where six or eight

others plastered the logs both inside and out with the cold clay paste.

The neatness of the work was astonishing, for while in some cases logs large enough to build a log house were to be found, in others they had to be woven out of coarse willow branches, the upright posts alone being of sufficient strength to support the roofs of sod (two layers) laid on with a neatness and precision that is seldom seen in this country; and the walls of the houses themselves were not only stuffed with clay, but presented, both inside and out, as smooth a surface as if the trowel of a first-rate plasterer had been at work. In many cases these people had neither tools nor nails, and the carpentering work of the interior of the houses is a marvel of ingenuity. Their great ovens, moulded out of clay, always presented a symmetrical appearance which the appellation "mud oven" does not convey. They are built close to the entrance, and occupy a space about five feet square. There are always three or four niches which are used to keep things warm and act as tiny cupboards, while the flat top, about four feet from the roof, is occupied on cold days by the old grandame with her never idle knitting needles, and perhaps close to her swings the curious cradle covered with a curtain drawn close round it, and containing a chubby baby swaddled, like most of the peasant race, in real swaddling clothes and looking for all the world like a parcel tied up with broad ribbons.

There are not many babies to swing from the ceiling in the Doukhobor houses. The terrible suffering that the people have been called upon to bear made the mother hearts of these great women rebel against the suffering for the tiny atoms of humanity who had not the great faith and reasoning powers of their parents to sustain them; and accordingly the women of the Doukhobortsi resolved that for the future no small atoms of humanity should come into the world of almost unendurable suffering. These women were ready to renounce all that was sweetest in their lives for the sake of those they loved; and now, thank God, our country can give them the right to be the mothers of little ones whom they cherish with all the tenderness so long denied their great mother hearts. It is no light thing for Canadian women to meditate on the suffering of these Christian sisters, deprived of so much of bodily comfort, deprived in many instances of their dear

ones by exile, and even deprived of the joy of feeling the tiny babes nestled to their bosoms; and it must be a great faith that has kept these same women from losing their tender womanly dispositions under such terrible circumstances; and that they have not lost it is testified to by all those whose good fortune has led them into close contact with these people. The barrier of language is a great one, and one feels so helpless at times when desiring to tell them of the sympathy and respect that woman feels for woman; but they are not, in the real sense of the word, an ignorant peasant race, for the most cultured woman of the nineteenth century will find a ready response to the universal language of her sex which expresses itself in a thousand and one little traits common to the whole mass of womanhood who share the Christian faith—a faith that inculcates the dignity attached to motherhood and wifehood as the highest possible ideal for the sex. This is what one feels so clearly while in the midst of these people—the sacredness of family ties, the anxiety for the well-being of the community.

They are in truth primitive Christians, and the writer, who attended their service held on the seventh day of the week in the early hours of the morning just after sunrise, saw in the worship of these people a strange likeness to those gatherings held in the Catacombs and in the chamber of some poor home in the far East. The great lonely prairie stretched away to the horizon; the walls of the house in which the service was held were yet damp with undried plaster, and through the village Cyprus fever was rampant. All week long these people had toiled early and late, many worn out with the effort to perform their work while in the grip of intermittent fever, living on bread and water, with broth made from the leaves of a low shrub. And yet as the sun rose on that Sunday morning men and women in spotless clothing wended their way to that well-swept log house; and the women, ranged on one side of the room, either recited their Psalms or chanted in harmony the hymns that the men followed with a full chord of solemn accompaniment. The Psalms sung and recited, the salutations of the blessed Trinity were exchanged. The salutations of ever-enduring brotherhood followed; then the confession of sins, as for a moment they knelt with foreheads pressed to the earth, and entreated, "Oh, Lord, forgive us all our sins." This was followed by the usual greetings,

and those who were ill or unable to attend the service were visited and greeted in brotherly love, and the rest of the day was spent in quiet and repose, only the necessary tasks being performed.

Cavil as they may at the importation of what some are pleased to call "pauper emigrants," there may be a gain for Canada that the average politician little reckons of.

The Doukhobortsi are placed very far from the mass of the Canadian people. This is a matter of necessity, as being children of the soil and a purely agricultural people, they need much land to support them. The seasons in the part of the country where they are located are short, and there is no time for a second crop; therefore the surface required for their support is immense. The fact that they must be so isolated from the Canadian people is to be regretted. Erroneous ideas regarding them are spread broadcast, and the opinions of the settlers among whom they live do not reach the centres of civilization. Here and there a disgruntled rancher will write to the papers expressing his disgust at the influx of foreign emigrants as neighbors. "Neighbors" in the ranching country mean the taking up of land which has hitherto been free pasture land, two or perhaps three miles from the rancher's shack; and it is well understood that the Government has ever found the ranching element a difficult one to deal with in respect to the subject of immigration. The rancher as a rule is eager to assure intending settlers that the land within many miles of his particular ranch is no good for farming purposes, and if the development of the country lay in the hands of the ranchers we should hear little of the "growing time." The country profits little by ranching. The mixed farming of the West is to be the industry which will develop the country on permanent lines, and it is mixed farming that is to hit a proper average and maintain an equable state of affairs.

Thus it is that an enlightened policy introduces a farming class who must represent both a producing and a consuming class at the same time. The rancher employs little labor and requires few implements. The farmer who raises mixed products employs much more labor, and consumes a more varied range of material.

The Doukhobortsi have already proved their adaptability in utilizing to the best advantage the raw products of the earth as no Anglo-Saxon could attempt to do. That they

will not be content to allow this state of things to continue is shown by the fact that through the inexperience of one of their leaders they were advised to make their own waggons, and wood was bought for them to manufacture them. They soon saw that waggons made by a regular manufacturer were far better suited to the country, and to-day in nearly every village fortunate enough to possess a waggon you will find one of the best manufacture, and the man who undertook to provide the wood for home manufacture has it on his hands.

The men are eager to learn, and the need that existed this summer for their taking positions as hired farm laborers was one which has proved an invaluable factor in educating them in Canadian methods of agriculture, also in teaching them something of the language and of the people among whom they have come to live. The law of compensation is clearly to be seen when one realizes that while the women have had a terrible share of the work involved in settling on the land, and have been deprived of the help and comfort of their menkind, the same menkind have literally been in the best possible position to acquire the knowledge necessary for them in the coming struggle for existence, and it has meant that their food was better suited to the requirements of hard labor than they would have had in the villages. There are many problems to be faced in regard to the future of these people, but it is safe to say that no better class of emigrant has ever been brought into the Northwest of Canada; and if the next twelve months give as good promise for the future as have the last eight, Canada has reason to congratulate herself on the advent of an industrious and moral people to her great Northwest.

LALLY BERNARD.

APPENDIX.

The following report has been put into the writer's hands at the date of publication, by Mr. H. P. Archer, who has just returned to the East after a tour through the different Doukhobor settlements. The report has been compiled from figures obtained from two or three different sources, and if not entirely accurate, it is as correct a report as can be obtained under the existing circumstances.

SUMMARY OF DOUKHOBOR STATISTICS.

COLONY.	No. of Villages.	No. of Souls.	No. of Houses.	No. of Home-stands.	Horses.	Foals.	Oxen.	Cows.	Calves.	Plows.	Waggons.	Fall Plow- ing. Ac.	Hay (loads).	Births.	Deaths.
Thunder Hill	13	1369	112	428	54	..	25	24	..	16	18	238	*..
Cyprus Doukhobors	9	1000	153	339	19	..	19	18	2	11	15	141	449	7	7
Orlovsky Doukhobors	2	371	37	110	9	1	6	4	1	2	3	38	130	1	6
Tambovsky Doukhobors ..	2	315	42	100	7	..	4	3	..	2	4	33	107	5	4
Kars (Whitesand River) ...	11	1442	116	456	88	5	23	41	21	28	34	184	1258	10	5
Elizavetpol Doukhobors ...	10	1330	129	436	50	9	32	18	2	27	27	164	700	14	8
Kars (Carlton).....	7	1163	112	359	81	13	61	46	24	33	39	236½	*..	..	4
Kars (Saskatoon)	3	309	37	98	22	1	1	9	9	77½	*..	1	2
Total.....	57	7299	738	2326	330	29	176	154	30	128	149	1812	..	38	36

* Plenty.

REMARKS.

No. of Souls.—The total arrivals in Canada are 7,361—a slight error in getting details from the villages.

Births and Deaths.—These are since actual arrival on their land, and do not include a few deaths during last winter, when the Doukhobors were at various points previous to getting out on their land. The figures are approximately for six months for 6,000 souls, shewing a death rate of 12 per 1,000 per annum, and a birth rate of 12.33 per 1,000.

HERBERT P. ARCHER.